ISMĀʿĪL ANQARAWĪ

The Lamp of Mysteries

A Commentary on the Light Verse of the Quran

Translated and edited by

BILAL KUŞPINAR

The Lamp of Mysteries

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ISMĀʿĪL RUSŪKHĪ ANQARAWĪ

The Lamp of Mysteries

(*Miṣbāḥ al-Asrār*)

A Commentary on the Light Verse of the Quran

Arabic text critically edited,
translated, and annotated by

BILAL KUŞPINAR

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To my mentor,
Alparslan Açıkgenç

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Bilal Kuşpınar
Ahlia University, Bahrain
18 May 2011

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Part I

Overview

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An introduction to Ismāʿīl Rusūkhī Anqarawī

His life

Ismāʿīl ibn Aḥmad Rusūkh al-Dīn al-Bayrāmī al-Mawlawī al-Anqarawī (Ankaravi), also well known as Rusūkhī Dede or Ismāʿīl Dede or Ḥazret-i Shāriḥ, was born in Ankara towards the end of the 16th century (around the late 10th century AH). The Ottoman biographical sources provide no information about his family life, apart from the name of his father Aḥmad, who was an Imam. Given his later scholarly accomplishments and highly respected spiritual standing, however, one would surmise that he must have descended from a noble family, whose close affiliation with the Bayrāmiyya Sufi order of the time seems to have been recorded in few secondary sources. His childhood, youth and even a considerable part of his adult life were spent mainly in the vicinity of Ankara, where he received his learning from various eminent scholars and spiritual masters.

Soon after the completion of his advanced-level training in Arabic and Persian, Anqarawī made an extensive study of the formal Islamic sciences, such as *tafsīr*; hadith, *kalām*, *fiqh* and *ḥikma*, in Egypt from AH 1008 to 1015. Establishing this solid background in these Sharīʿa-related disciplines paved the way for his sober and confident entry into a close examination of the esoteric sciences and the minute details and delicacies of *taṣawwuf* (Sufism). It also facilitated his ardent initiation into, and rapid progress through, certain *ṭarīqa*s (Sufi orders).

Long before his initiation into Sufism, Anqarawī had made remarkable progress, especially in the field of Islamic jurisprudence; so much so that, during his sojourn in Egypt, he had even engaged in legal debates with prominent *mufti*s (jurisconsults) of the time as

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to whether smoking is permissible or not.[1] On account of his vast erudition in religious sciences, as well as his profound acquaintance with subtleties of *taṣawwuf*, he was highly commended by eminent Ottoman biographers such as Kātib Çelebi and Evliyā Çelebi, who portrayed him as 'an ocean of spiritual treasure'.[2] He was accorded the honorific epithet *rusūkh al-dīn*, or simply *rusūkhī* (well grounded in knowledge), because of his mastery in both formal and mystical dimensions of Islam.

Ismā'īl Dede's mystical life appears to have commenced in Ankara, where he had been initiated, most likely through the influence of his father, into one of the leading Sufi orders of the time, the Bayrāmiyya, in which he was later to advance to the post of chief-master (Shaykh).[3] Meanwhile, as recorded in the biographical account posthumously prefaced to his own *Sharḥ al-Mathnawī*,[4] he is also said to have entered at one time into the Khalwatiyya Sufi order and traversed all of its stations, finally obtaining therefrom an *ijāza* (authorization). However, the exact extent of his involvement in the latter order still remains vague and unattested by other sources. The highly esteemed position he held in the former order, on the other hand, is established beyond any doubt. It was in fact while he was a Shaykh in the Bayrāmī *ṭarīqa* that Anqarawī contracted a severe ophthalmic disease and hence had to stop his studying and teaching for a while. Consequently, upon receiving a spiritual sign, he at once moved to Konya, where he first paid a visit to the tomb of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī and then had his historic meeting with the then Shaykh of the local Mawlawī convent (*Mawlawīkhāna*), Bostan Çelebi I (d.1040/1630), who was, reportedly, not only helpful in the restoration of his eyesight, but also increasingly influential throughout the rest of his life, particularly in the development of his *Mawlawī*

1. N. Elgin, 'Ismail Ankaravī (Mesnevī Şārihi Rusūhī Dede)', p.33.

2. Evliyā Çelebi, *Evliya Çelebi Seyāhatnāmesi*, p.103; Kātib Çelebi (Ḥājjī Khalīfa), *Feẓleke-i Kātib Çelebi*, p.148.

3. 'Alī Enver, *Samā'khāne-i Adab*, p.81.

4. Anqarawī, *Majmū'at al-Laṭā'if wa Maṭmūrat al-Ma'ārif* (*Sharḥ al-Mathnawī*), vol.1, p.11.

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personality. In fact, Anqarawī's encounter with this Shaykh was, as noted by several eminent writers, 'a turning point' for him, as it marked the end of his hitherto valuable services as chief-master to the Bayrāmī order and led to his new mystical journey in the *ṭarīqa* of the Mawlawiyya. From this crucial moment until his death, he devoted his life to learning, studying and teaching the ideas, rituals and practices of the latter order.

It was Bostan Çelebi I who subjected Anqarawī to the long spiritual training process, with its strict ascetic exercises known as *çile*, and who then officially and readily admitted him as a faithful novice into the Mawlawī order. Naturally, such a heavy and laborious ascetic training was not difficult for a person like Anqarawī, who had gone through similar practices long before he became a Shaykh of the Bayrāmiyya order. That is why he soon became closely and thoroughly acquainted with both the theoretical and practical aspects of the Mawlawiyya order in Konya under the supervision of Bostan Çelebi I, who subsequently appointed him to the chief-post (*postnişin*) of the Galata Mawlawī convent of Istanbul, in lieu of Abdi Dede, in the year 1019/1610.[5]

At this juncture, it must be mentioned that a few Ottoman sources seem to relate two different accounts concerning Anqarawī's first affiliation with the Mawlawī *ṭarīqa*: the earlier account claims that it was prior to his arrival in Konya and during his stay in Ankara, while the later one asserts that it was after his arrival in Istanbul.[6] But, as has been clearly demonstrated in our major study on Anqarawī, both of these opinions are anachronistic and totally inconsistent with the well-documented historical facts.[7]

It is certain that Anqarawī was sent to the Galata Mawlawī convent by Bostan Çelebi I as a result of his rapid advancement in the Mawlawī teachings. There his actual Mawlawī career began to

5. M. Tāhir, *Osmanlı Müellifleri*, vol. 1, p. 120; C. Kerametli, *Galata Mevlevikhanesi*, p. 30.

6. M. Süreyya, *Sijilli-i 'Uthmānī*, p. 352; N. Elgin, 'Ismail Ankaravī', p. 33.

7. See for more details, B. Kuşpınar, *Ismā'īl Anqaravī on the Illuminative Philosophy*, pp. 8–9; E. Yetik, *Ismail-i Ankaravi, Hayati, Eserleri ve Tasavvufi Görüşleri*, p. 54.

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flourish with full vigour and enthusiasm. From the time of his accession to the highest post of the convent in 1019/1610 until his death in 1041/1631 he remained a very influential and prolific spiritual master of the Mawlawī order. Besides his extensive preaching, teaching and lecturing on the work of the *Mathnawī*, he composed many of his works during this time, which will be listed below.

During his twenty-one year career as the Shaykh of the Galata Mawlawī centre, Anqarawī attracted to his weekly circles and sermons many young novices and lay people from various backgrounds. He soon impressed his general audience with his passionate lectures, and conquered the hearts of his disciples with his exemplary piety and charismatic personality. His fame spread rapidly within the Ottoman scholarly milieu, and particularly amongst the Sufis of his time. However, an increasing reputation brought him various burdens and hardships: he occasionally found himself in the centre of controversies and confrontations which were taking place between two segments of 17th-century Ottoman society, the followers of Kadızade Meḥmed Efendi (1582–1635), known as the *Kadızadeliler* or *Faqılar*, and the adherents of the Khalwatī and Mawlawī orders. In the name of defending the Sharī'a, the former group – composed mainly of what might be called 'literal-minded preachers' – launched a notoriously bitter campaign against the latter, including all those who were sympathetic to them, condemning most of their mystical rituals, such as 'supererogatory prayers', 'audition' (*samā'*) and 'whirling' (*raqṣ*). These and other similar practices were seen by the *Kadızadeliler* as violations of orthodox Islam.[8] Such negative and harmful propaganda incited many staunch Sufi followers and masters to defend the legitimacy of their positions and refute the critiques of their opponents.

Anqarawī was undoubtedly one of these eminent Sufis, probably the most renowned in terms of the firmness and resolve he displayed in the face of the attacks of the *Kadızadeliler*, and also because of the

8. Kātib Çelebi, *The Balance of Truth*, pp.136–7; M. Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety*, pp.129–81.

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significant literary contribution he made in support of the above-mentioned mystical rituals by furnishing proofs and arguments from the textual sources of Islam, and from the writings of Sufis before him. On this specific subject, he produced a noteworthy short treatise entitled *Ḥujjat al-Samā'* (*The Proof for [the legitimacy of] Mystical Audition*), which won him not only fame among his Sufi peers and disciples, but, more importantly, the appreciation and admiration of two eminent personalities of the time, Yaḥyā Efendi, the Shaykh al-Islām (Chief Religious Authority), and 'Azīz Maḥmūd Hüdā'ī, the celebrated Shaykh of the Jalwatiyya Sufi order and spiritual tutor of Sultan Aḥmed I.

Meanwhile, Anqarawī also faced severe criticism from his own Mawlawī circles, both those of his own time and later generations, due to his commentary on the so-called apocryphal seventh *defter* (volume) of the *Mathnawī*, which appeared around 1035/1625, according to Kātib Çelebi (Ḥājjī Khalīfa). In spite of several substantial proofs which Anqarawī extracted from within the *Mathnawī* itself, and quite a few plausible arguments that he provided from external sources, this pseudo-seventh volume found no acceptance among either the eminent Mawlawī masters or the other experts on Jalāl al-Dīn and his works.

One of the more serious allegations directed against Anqarawī on this matter was that he had deliberately commented on this dubious volume, which was, according to Cevdet Paşa's assessment, 'forged by a person called Husameddin in an attempt to attack the doctrines of Shaykh al-Akbar Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-'Arabī', simply because he wanted to appease the *Kadızadeliler*, or at least appear to them in a good light. However, as has been pointed out by several prominent Turkish historians and writers, such allegations are not only unfair and groundless but also far from reflecting reality, since Anqarawī was constantly in confrontation with the *Kadızadeliler*, even fearlessly condemning them as 'heretics'. Furthermore, as justification for this seventh *defter*, he provided his own proofs and arguments, most of which we have already listed elsewhere, discussed in detail from the perspective of the author himself, and assessed within the

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overall context of the Mawlawī tradition.[9] Therefore, although one may still question the authenticity of the seventh volume and its ascription to Rūmī for other possible reasons, Anqarawī's genuine acceptance of it cannot be attributed to any ulterior motives.

Ismā'īl Anqarawī's later life in Istanbul, as has just been noted, was indeed tumultuous and fraught with adversity. In spite of such unfortunate conditions, he unfailingly continued to defend his position and to carry out fervently all the tasks expected of a Sufi master. Death befell him in 1041/1631, when he was still active as Shaykh at the Galata convent. Interestingly, the numerical value (*abjad*) of his death-year, 1041, corresponds with the term *khitām* in Arabic, which means 'completion' or 'ending'. His tomb, located in the courtyard of his convent and covered with a dome that was erected around 1829, has become a focal point of attraction and even a shrine frequented by many visitors. A couplet praising Anqarawī's exemplary status among other Mawlawī masters and his remarkable commentary on the *Mathnawī* has been inscribed over the gate of his tomb.

His role and place in the Ottoman intellectual milieu

Ismā'īl Anqarawī's intellectual career seems to have revolved and developed around three principal fields of Islam: Sufism, Islamic law and theology, and Islamic philosophy. Each of these fields was studied in depth by him through the major works of their respective representatives. It was undoubtedly Sufism which occupied the most considerable portion of his time, but always in parallel with the other two. In Sufism, Anqarawī benefited immensely above all from two distinguished Muslim mystics – his spiritual progenitor Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī, and the Shaykh al-Akbar, Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn

9. For a detailed treatment of this issue, see B. Kuşpınar, 'Ismā'īl Anḳaravī and the Significance of His Commentary in the Mevlevī Literature', *al-Shajara*, 1: 51–75.

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al-ʿArabī – whose ideas he not only incorporated in large measure into his own works but also defended ardently against his adversaries. While Rūmī's works, especially his *Mathnawī*, constituted the backbone of Anqarawī's worldview, Ibn al-ʿArabī's *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* enhanced his comprehension of both the *Mathnawī* and the many concepts and ideas of early Sufis, such as Bāyazīd al-Bisṭāmī (d.873) and al-Ḥallāj (d.923).

With the help of Rūmī's poetic analogies and Ibn al-ʿArabī's imaginary parables, Anqarawī, as a Sufi himself, applied his own insights to the esoteric meanings of the so-called shocking statements of ecstatic Sufis and interpreted them further in accordance with the Sharīʿa. In so doing, he always tried to maintain an equilibrium and harmony between the requirements of the Sharīʿa and the seemingly controversial concepts and practices of Sufism such as *samāʿ*, *raqṣ* and *dhikr*; and his profound knowledge of Islamic law and theology supported him in defending these and other aspects of Sufism and the Sufi orders against opponents like the *Kadızadeliler*. The arguments and evidences he employed in advocating his mystical perspective exhibited not only his profound loyalty to traditional Islam, and the Sharīʿa in particular, but also his vehement reaction to the 'narrow-minded' interpretations evinced by the so-called defenders of the Sharīʿa. In other words, according to Anqarawī, one can quite legitimately reconcile the fundamental teachings of the Quran and the Sunna with the allegedly antinomian doctrines of certain mystics like Ibn al-ʿArabī and the so-called blasphemous utterances of the ecstatic Sufis like al-Ḥallāj, including the supposedly innovatory practices of certain *ṭarīqa*s, such as audition and whirling.

Anqarawī's accomplishment lies above all in his serious preoccupation with philosophy in general and illuminative philosophy in particular, especially at a time when, as the famous Ottoman historian Ḥājjī Khalīfa noted, philosophical sciences were bitterly denounced by the literal-minded, whose most obvious representatives were the *Kadızadeliler*. Despite such fierce opposition, Anqarawī undertook with determination the task of explaining the *Hayākil al-Nūr* (*The Forms of Light*), the eminent work of the Shaykh al-Ishrāq, Shihāb al-

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Dīn al-Suhrawardī (d.1191; see below, the works of Anqarawī). In so doing, he not only defied the ban that had been imposed on the study of philosophy by the above-mentioned groups and their supporters, who at times influenced the ruling elite, but also perpetuated philosophical studies in the Ottoman context by his formidable contribution to them. To the best of our knowledge, Anqarawī's Commentary on the *Hayākil* represents one of the very few exemplary treatments of philosophy in the Ottoman period. The Commentary as a whole offers the general principles of the *Ishrāqī* wisdom in the contexts of both Rūmī's and Ibn al-'Arabī's mystical ideas, while accommodating them all within the teachings of orthodox Islam. Anqarawī adopts a conciliatory and selective approach in explaining the various doctrines of the Muslim philosophers. For instance, while he, on the one hand, rejects the philosophers' assumption of the eternity of the world on the grounds that it is apparently contrary to the basic teachings of Islam, he attempts to justify, on the other, their theory of emanation on the basis of one or two hadiths that circulated among the Sufis concerning *'aql* (intellect) and *qalam* (pen), and the *nūr Muḥammadī* (Muḥammadan light). Whenever the matter involves an already well-defined and well-established view or position by eminent Sufis of the past, Anqarawī takes issue with the philosophers, including al-Suhrawardī himself. He flatly opposes, for instance, the philosophers' theory of the simultaneous creation of the soul with the body, and maintains firmly, like his Sufi peers, that the former is created long before the latter. This sort of conciliatory and selective method of Anqarawī appears to be a *modus operandi* in many other conflicting issues that he tries to resolve from his orthodox Sufi standpoint. In order to substantiate or prove his own views, he makes use of the arguments of the great theologians of Islam, such as Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī.[10]

10. For a thorough examination of this subject, see B. Kuşpınar, *Ismā'īl Anqaravī on the Illuminative Philosophy*.

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His major works

Anqarawī, as previously noted, was hailed not just as a popular Sufi who preached to the public and taught his selected disciples, but also, and perhaps primarily, as a prolific author who produced more than thirty works dealing with a variety of subjects ranging from language, philosophy, and mysticism to exegesis of the Quran and Hadith. His chief fame rests on his *magnum opus*, *Majmūʿat al-Laṭāʾif wa Maṭmūrat al-Maʿārif* (*The Collection of Subtleties and the Hidden Treasure of Knowledge*), widely known as *Sharḥ al-Mathnawī* (*The Commentary on the Mathnawī*). Despite Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı's reservations, Anqarawī's *Sharḥ* is still regarded by many experts as 'the most complete interpretation' of and 'most celebrated commentary' on the *Mathnawī*. This work won the author world-wide recognition and an exceptionally high-ranking status in all Mawlawī circles; so much so that, after his death, his name and works began to be required and cited in the licences issued for potential *mathnawīkhāns*, i.e. official lecturers on the *Mathnawī*. Anqarawī's *Sharḥ al-Mathnawī* has so far been published, in six volumes, several times in Egypt (1806, 1825, 1835) and Istanbul (1841 and 1872). It still remains to be critically edited. Nevertheless, several essays have appeared discussing the importance of the work, and a doctoral study is currently underway on certain aspects of it. An abridged version was translated by Çengi Yūsuf Dede (d.1080/1669) and published under the title *al-Minhāj al-Qawī fī Sharḥ al-Mathnawī* in Cairo (1289/1872). It was also translated, in its complete form, into Persian by ʿIṣmat Sattārzāde, and published in Tehran in 1348 Sh./1970 under the title *Sharḥ-i Kabīr-i Anqarawī bar Mathnawī-yi Maʿnawī-yi Mawlawī*. Furthermore, in his English rendition of the *Mathnawī* Nicholson consulted Anqarawī's *Sharḥ* extensively and referred to it more frequently than others in his explanatory notes.

Minhāj al-Fuqarāʾ (*The Guideline for the Dervishes*) is Anqarawī's other major work, offering a set of principles, as well as the pivotal concepts and necessary practices, for Mawlawī disciples. It was

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published twice in Ottoman script, at Bulaq in 1256/1840 and Istanbul in 1296/1869. There is a modern Turkish transcription, which has been made available in print by two different editors,[11] as well as an analysis of the work.[12]

Īḍaḥ al-Ḥikam (*The Elucidation of Wisdom*) is another important work, written by Anqarawī in Ottoman as a commentary on the celebrated work of the Ishrāqī philosopher, Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī. A critical edition, together with a detailed analysis comparing it with al-Dawwānī's commentary, *Shawākil al-Ḥūr*, has already been produced and published as part of my work on Anqarawī.

Sharḥ-i Ḥadīth-i Arbaʿīn (*Commentary on Forty Hadiths*) expounds on forty hadiths selected by Anqarawī himself. It has recently been published in modern Turkish script, alongside the Arabic texts of the hadiths.[13]

Zubdat al-Fuḥūṣ fī Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ (*The Gist of the Analysis Concerning the Ornament of the Bezels*) contains Anqarawī's Turkish commentary on Ibn al-ʿArabī's succinct work *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ*. Inspired by Jāmī's Persian interpretation of the same work, it was published in its original form in Istanbul in 1328/1910; it was recently transformed into plain Turkish script by Ayhan Yıldırım and published under the title *Muhyiddin Ibnu'l-Arabi Nakşe'l-Fusus, Gerçeklerin Özü: Şerhi Ismail Rusuhi Ankaravi* (Istanbul: Ataç Yayınları, 2005).

Simāṭ al-Mūqinīn (*The Rank of the People of Certainty*) is a short treatise by Anqarawī in Arabic outlining the major aspects of Rūmī's Preface to the first volume of his *Mathnawī*. I have published an English summary of it.[14]

11. One is by Sadettin Ekici, *Minhacu'l-Fukara*; the other, in an abridged form, is by Afif Tektaş, *Şeyh İsmail Ankaravi'nin Minhacü'l: Fukara Adlı Eserinin Özü Fukaranın Yolu*.

12. Yetik, *Ismail-i Ankaravî*.

13. Semih Ceyhan, *Hadislerle Tasavvuf ve Mevlevî Erkanı: Mesnevî Beyitleriyle Kırk Hadis Şerhi*.

14. Kuşpınar, 'The Preface to the *Mathnawī*: Ismāʿīl Ankaravī's Commentary', pp.303–14.

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Some of his other works are as follows: *Ḥujjat al-Samāʿ* (*The Proof of Mystical Audition*), Istanbul: 1286/1869; *Jāmiʿ al-Āyāt* (*The Collection of the Quranic Verses*), preserved in manuscripts; *Fātiḥ al-Abyāt* (*The Opener of the Couplets*), preserved in manuscripts; *Futūḥāt-i ʿAyniyya* (*Ocular Revelations*), Istanbul: 1328/1910; *Miftāḥ al-Balāgha wa Miṣbāḥ al-Faṣāḥa* (*The Key for Eloquence and the Lamp for Oration*), Istanbul: 1284/1898; *al-Ḥikam al-Mundarija fī Sharḥ al-Munfarija* (*The Compacted Wisdom on the Commentary on al-Munfarija*), Istanbul: 1327/1909; *Niṣab-i Mawlawī* (*The Origin and the Path of the Mawlawiyya*), transformed into modern Turkish and published by Ibrahim Kunt and Yakup Şafak, under the title *Nisabu'l-Mevlevi: Tasavvufi Konularina Göre Mesneviden Seçmeler* (Konya: Tekin Yayinevi, 2005); *Tuḥfat al-Barāra* (*The Gift of the Righteous*), preserved in manuscripts; *Risālat-i ʿUyūn-i ʿAshara* (*The Treatise on the Twelve Distinguished Stations and States*), available in manuscripts; *Risālat-i Uṣūl-i Ṭarīqat-i Mawlānā* (*The Treatise on the Foundations of the Path of Mawlānā*), available in manuscripts; *Dīwān*, preserved in manuscripts.[15]

Last but not least, we need to cite Anqarawī's mystical exegesis of the Light Verse of the Quran, entitled *Miṣbāḥ al-Asrār* (*The Lamp of Mysteries*), which is the central study of this present work.

15. For a list of Anqarawī's entire corpora and their descriptions, see Kuşpınar, *Ismāʿīl Ankaravī on the Illuminative Philosophy*, pp.18–43; Yetik, *Ismail-i Ankaravî*, pp.65–121.

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A review of the *Miṣbāḥ al-Asrār*

The objective of the work

The *Miṣbāḥ al-Asrār* (*The Lamp of Mysteries*) was written in Arabic by the renowned 17th-century Ottoman Sufi Ismāʿīl Anqarawī, whose life, intellectual personality and works have already been introduced to readers in several Turkish and English publications. This present work deserves special consideration as a significant contribution to the understanding of the famous Light Verse of the Quran, namely Sura 24: 35, on which many commentaries have been composed, before and after Anqarawī, by various eminent Muslim exegetes, philosophers, theologians, and Sufis. We will mention some of these works later in our analysis.

Let us begin by stating that Ismāʿīl Rusūkhī Anqarawī offers neither any clear objectives nor any explicit reasons for composing the *Miṣbāḥ al-Asrār*. We glean from its opening lines that the work appears to be the result of the author's personal quest for, and enquiry into, the treasures or mysteries behind the Light Verse. As he himself tells us, during one of his daily readings of the Quran he came upon the famous verse, 'whose ostensibly terse, succinct yet inwardly subtle and profound words' so captivated his imagination that he at once decided to investigate its meaning. Thus, in the hope of gaining some insight into it, Anqarawī first studied several well-known exegeses of the Quran, such as *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa Asrār al-Taʾwīl* by al-Qāḍī al-Bayḍawī (d.791/1388), *Maʿālim al-Tanzīl* by ibn Masʿūd al-Baghawī (d.516/1122) and *al-Kashshāf ʿan Ḥaqāʾiq al-Tanzīl* by Ibn ʿUmar Zamakhsharī (d.545/1150). However, his perusal of all of these eminent commentaries, he confessed, added very little to what he already knew about the meaning of the verse itself. It was then that he happened upon the *Mishkāt al-Anwār* (*The Niche of Lights*), another essential work on the same subject by the world-renowned

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scholar of Islām Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, an encounter that moved him with such immense joy that he immediately began studying it in the hope that it would satisfy his longing for discovering the latent realities embedded in the verse. Nevertheless, after a close and thorough reading of it, and although he acknowledged its literary significance with admiration, he still found it unable to answer his yearning for greater understanding. For, in his judgement, despite its extensive elaboration of certain technical notions, al-Ghazālī's *Mishkāt* appeared to him to have been written as a *philosophical*, rather than *mystical*, discourse – hence falling short of revealing the inner and spiritual dimensions of the verse. In other words, according to Anqarawī, a verse so laden in gnostic–mystical significance was unable to be explained in purely philosophical terms. Because of this he felt morally compelled to write his own commentary, with the express aim of displaying the *precious pearls* that occurred to him during his intense meditation upon it. He hoped by so doing that these pearls would be made known and transmitted to all gnostics in general, and in particular to the dervishes who would follow in the footsteps of Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī.

The date of its composition

As we demonstrate elsewhere, it is very difficult for us to establish with certainty a chronological order for the works of Ismā'īl Anqarawī, which amount to about thirty-three in all. In the first place, such a task would demand a thorough examination of his entire corpus, most of which is still preserved in manuscripts in various libraries; besides, only a few of his works appear to have been dated either by the author himself or by transcribers or copyists. Encompassing virtually all the traditional Islamic subjects, the multifaceted scholarship of Anqarawī was clearly seen in depth in his *magnum opus*, the immense commentary on the *Mathnawī*, a work which is difficult to assess in its entirety. Our investigation has thus far been able to establish that the following three works were all completed

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around 1034/1624: *Fātiḥ al-Ahyāt*, a work expounding the first eighteen verses of the *Mathnawī*; the *Jāmi' al-Āyāt*, a treatise explicitly detailing the Quranic verses, Prophetic sayings, and certain Arabic maxims recorded in the *Mathnawī*; and the *Minhāj al-Fuqarā'*, a monograph presenting the necessary principles and guidelines for the initiates of the Mawlawī Sufi order. It has also been established that the *Ḥujjat al-Samā'*, which defends the permissibility of certain forms of music, mystical audition and dance from the religious point of view, was written in 1027/1617, and that the *Futūḥāt-i 'Ayniyya*, a detailed exegesis of the first chapter of the Quran, was composed in 1037/1627. We can also include in this list two more of his treatises: one, his succinct commentary on the famous poem by Ibn al-Fāriḍ, entitled *Sharḥ-i Qaṣīdat al-Mīmiyya al-Khamriyya*, written in about 1030/1620; and the other, his Persian monograph, *Niṣab-i Mawlawī*, composed in 1041/1631, and therefore most likely to be one of his later works, if not the last.

As far as the *Miṣbāḥ al-Asrār* is concerned, no date is given for its composition in any of the available handwritten copies. The author himself is silent about when and how he embarked on its actual composition. In spite of such drawbacks, we can still get an idea, if not an explicit indication, that may help us to determine the approximate date of its composition or completion. A possible clue can be found in one of the manuscripts of the *Miṣbāḥ* which is preserved in the Süleymaniye Library, Hacı Mahmut Efendi, MS. 2871/1. This particular copy records the date of its transcription as 1035/1625, but does not name the transcriber himself, which means that it was copied or transcribed about six years before the demise of the author (d.1041/1631). From this date we know that it cannot have been written after 1035/1625.

Given this information, we propose two suggestions for the date of its composition: the first possibility is that the work was committed to writing in the year mentioned by the transcriber upon the author's direct dictation, probably along with several other works, in which case the transcriber was very likely to have been one of Anqarawī's Mawlawī disciples. The second possibility is that the

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copyist transcribed his own copy from the already existing version or versions available to him, in which case the original composition of the work might have predated 1035/1625. This latter suggestion undoubtedly leaves the door open for further speculation on this matter, but with potentially inconclusive results.

However, there is no internal evidence that can be drawn from the *Miṣbāḥ* itself, since it makes no explicit reference to any of the author's other works. Nevertheless, a close analysis of the work would suggest that it may have been written after the author's composition of his commentary, the *Īḍāḥ al-Ḥikam*, on al-Suhrawardī's celebrated work, *Hayākil al-Nūr*. For, as will be shown in the accompanying explanatory notes to this present translation, Anqarawī seems not only to have been inspired by the *Hayākil al-Nūr*, but has also literally borrowed some of the technical notions employed by the Ishrāqī Master, adapting them with slight modifications to his own work. For instance, al-Suhrawardī's concept of *governing spirit* (*al-rūḥ al-sulṭānī*) in the *Hayākil* appears in Anqarawī's *Miṣbāḥ* as *governing light* (*al-nūr al-sulṭānī*), each term referring in the final analysis to one and the same entity – that is, the rational soul. In addition, the division of the worlds into three – that of the intellect, that of the soul, and that of the senses – in the earlier work is repeated verbatim in the later one. And again, occasional invocatory phrases made up mostly of the word *nūr* and its derivatives are used in almost parallel situations in both works. Considering all these affinities, we can assert with a considerable degree of assurance that Anqarawī's commentary *Īḍāḥ al-Ḥikam* may well have prepared a solid ground for the compilation of his *Miṣbāḥ*, in which case this later work must have been written after the earlier one, the date of composition of which is also uncertain. As we have already seen, it is rather surprising that Anqarawī made no reference in the *Miṣbāḥ* to any of his other works, nor to al-Suhrawardī's *Hayākil*.

Bearing in mind the above arguments, and taking into consideration the mystical profundity of the work itself, we can justifiably suggest that it is most likely to have been composed during Anqarawī's later period, sometime after his appointment to the position of chief

Shaykh at the Galata Mawlawī Lodge in 1019/1610 and definitely before or during 1035/1625, as indicated on one of the handwritten copies. All in all, the work reflects the author's highly developed degree of theosophical knowledge and mystical experience, which implies that the *Miṣbāḥ* is the result of his rich and consummate erudition.

A general analysis of the Miṣbāḥ

Anqarawī divides the entire work into four main chapters. The first one deals with the nature of light, the second with the characteristics of the lamp, the niche and the glass, the third with that of the sacred olive tree, and the last with the concept of guidance.

In the opening lines of the first chapter, Anqarawī takes up the task of defining the term light (*nūr*) and then goes on to discuss how it is related to God. Light, as he defines it, 'is a kind of property (*kayfiyya*) that radiates from the sun, the moon and the fire, and falls on the earth and the wall and all besides the two'. As a definition, it echoes the already widely accepted concept of light among Muslim thinkers. It even appears to paraphrase, for instance, what al-Bayḍawī wrote about it in his *Anwār al-Tanzīl*: 'Light originally stands for a property (*kayfiyya*) which is perceived first by a seeing eye (*al-baṣīra*) and by which all other objects of vision are also perceived. It is, again, a property that is effused from two luminaries [i.e., the sun and the moon] on the opaque objects facing them.'[1] According to al-Bayḍawī, when taken in this sense light can only be attributed to God in two ways: (1) by implicit annexation; for example, when you say '*Zayd*^{un} *karam*^{un}' (Zayd is generous), it is to be understood as '*Zayd*^{un} *dhū karam*^{in}' (Zayd is the possessor of generosity or Zayd has generosity); or (2) by metaphorical interpretation or application, in

1. Al-Bayḍawī, *Anwār al-Tanzīl*, 2/124. Again, we find some components of this description reiterated in al-Jurjānī's *al-Taʿrīfāt*, where the author briefly states: 'Light is a property (*kayfiyya*) which is perceived first by the seer, by means of which other objects of vision are perceived', p.255.

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which case it is to be understood in one of the following senses if applied to God:

(i) God is the illuminator of the heavens and the earth, i.e. it is God who illumines both the heavens and the earth, either through luminary planets and light which radiates from them, or through angels and prophets.
(ii) God is the governor of the heavens and the earth, and as such He is comparable to an eminent earthly ruler who in himself deserves to be called 'enlightener' on account of his providing the best possible governance and guidance for his subordinates who are in turn worthy of being called 'enlightened'.
(iii) God is the sole agent that brings the heavens and the earth into existence, in such a way that He, being in Himself Self-Manifest and Self-Visible, renders the heavens and the earth manifest and visible, just as the light, which is visible by itself, makes others visible. In other words, the prime cause of visibility in both cases is existence itself, and conversely, the cause of invisibility is non-existence. So, light is identical with 'existence', just as its opposite, darkness, is identical with 'non-existence'.
(iv) Light may be related to God in terms of its function in the process of perception. Thus, it is through God that perception comes about and it is He who renders man perceptive and objects perceivable.

Needless to say, as with al-Suhrawardī's *Hayākil al-Nūr*, al-Ghazālī's *Mishkāt al-Anwār* also had a considerable influence on Anqarawī's work. However, as we will demonstrate shortly, both works do seem to diverge on several important points, although they share some others in common.

The most noticeable difference between the two works consists in their respective styles of discourse. In the *Mishkāt* al-Ghazālī uses discursive and philosophical discourse, whereas Anqarawī's discourse in the *Miṣbāḥ* tends to be more experiential and mystical. In fact, as already mentioned, this is one of the essential comments

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which Anqarawī himself puts forward on the work of al-Ghazālī. He argues that all types of gnostic knowledge in the latter's work appear to have been expressed in the language of the philosophers, and all types of subtleties have been arranged according to the classification of terms by the gnostics. In other words, the *Mishkāt* is a work of gnostic philosophy that combines the gnosis of the gnostics and the theoretical knowledge of the philosophers, whereas the *Miṣbāḥ* is more of a mystical intuition or, perhaps more precisely, an unveiling (*kashf*).

Such major differences as these become even more apparent in their respective linguistic styles and in their respective usage and explanation of certain key concepts. In al-Ghazālī's work most of the analyses concerning the meanings of the central notions of the Light Verse, such as 'lamp', 'niche' and 'glass', rest upon and resemble the explanation that the prominent Muslim peripatetic philosopher Ibn Sīnā had already offered in several of his works. In his small treatise, *Ithbāt al-Nubuwwāt* (*The Establishment of Prophecy*), for instance, Ibn Sīnā gives a rational interpretation of the same Light Verse within the framework of his own metaphysical system. Expounding on the symbolic meanings of the above-cited technical terms, he analyses them in accordance with his theory of intellect. So, when we carefully examine Ghazālī's *Mishkāt* and Ibn Sīnā's *Ithbāt* in comparison with each other, we can conclude that Ghazālī's explanation of the verse appears to draw substantially on Ibn Sīnā's exposition of it, but probably with one ostensible difference – that is, on the nature of the light itself. While Ibn Sīnā conceived 'light' metaphorically and symbolically, and hence interpreted it as 'the good and the cause of the good', al-Ghazālī took it in a real sense exactly as Anqarawī did, and thus attributed it, without any hesitation, directly to God, further emphasizing that God is the most worthy of being named 'light', as He Himself is the most visible and makes everything else visible. After all, Light is one of His Essential Names.

Incidentally, if we briefly put aside al-Ghazālī's *Mishkāt* and turn our attention to another of his important works, *al-Maqṣad al-Asnā fī Sharḥ Asmā' Allāh al-Ḥusnā*, in which he gives a detailed exposition

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of God's ninety-nine Names, we find him once again dealing with the Light Verse, yet this time from a somewhat ontological perspective. In this work he states explicitly that 'Existence is a light streaming forth upon things from the Light of His Essence, for He *is the light of the heavens and the earth*.'[2]

Returning again to Anqarawī's own explanation: while benefiting from Ghazālī's work, it seems to have been inspired by, and to a certain extent developed upon, three principal metaphysical doctrines: the love-centred Sufism of Rūmī, the gnostic-based theosophy of Ibn al-'Arabī and the illuminative-oriented wisdom of Suhrawardī. As we shall show in our explanatory notes, it is when Anqarawī expounds on and elucidates various implications of the pivotal concepts of the verse that he makes use of the ideas of these prominent Muslim sages. Although he was a leading Mawlawī master in his own time, he had nevertheless acquired a profound understanding of the major works of Suhrawardī and Ibn al-'Arabī, and devoted separate commentaries to some of these works. His close acquaintance with their doctrines is apparent in his current work, the *Miṣbāḥ*. But this should not influence us into forming the hasty and incorrect opinion that his explanation is a mere reproduction, reformulation or synthesis of the ideas of these sages. On the contrary: although seemingly carrying forward certain notions from the works of his predecessors, Anqarawī's interpretation offers very fresh, if not entirely novel, and quite substantial insights into the meaning of the verse under examination. Let us now consider a few of the more striking aspects of his analysis.

First of all, according to Anqarawī, the word 'light', irrespective of how it is taken – ontologically or epistemologically, physically or spiritually – refers, in its real signification, truly and exclusively to God. Like al-Ghazālī, he too stresses that it is God alone who is the real Light and that, if there is anything that deserves to be adequately and truthfully described by the name 'light', it must be God alone. Aside from Him, all other beings and entities may only be named

2. Al-Ghazālī, *The Ninety-nine Beautiful Names of God*, p. 145.

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as such either derivatively or metaphorically and not in the real sense at all. Ontologically speaking, as Anqarawī argues, all that is other than God is brought into existence (*wujūd*) or, say, appearance (*ẓuhūr*), from their pristine state of non-existence (*'adam*), or that of darkness (*ẓulma*), as a result of His casting the rays of His own Light upon them. Hence, everything owes its existence to the Existence and Light of God, Who is then the most entitled to the real name 'Light' as its *Donor* (Provider), while all other beings become qualified for such 'entitlement' only through Him.

If looked at from an epistemological point of view, every being and every entity – corporeal and immaterial alike – can only be apprehended by virtue of God's Light and Knowledge. In other words, He is the principal cause of the entirety of all existence and appearance, and He is the very source of all knowledge and gnosis. Anqarawī emphasizes firmly that all the knowledge we claim to possess concerning tangible objects and spiritual entities, as well as the realities hidden behind them, is wholly dependent upon and derived from God's Knowledge. For this reason, any discursive attempt or rational effort at proving His existence by means of the existence of all other things produces no conclusive results at all. Rather, it is His all-pervading Existence that brings every entity into existence, and it is His all-surrounding Light that renders the whole universe manifest, and again it is His all-encompassing Knowledge that empowers every being with knowledge, cognition and intuition. In a nutshell, none of these is ever possible without Him.

Evidently, Anqarawī's ontological and epistemological analysis draws considerably on Ibn al-'Arabī's interpretative account of the same verse as precisely described at length in his *magnum opus* the *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* and presented in summary in his *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*. In numerous places in these works, Ibn al-'Arabī takes up the verse and offers explanations for it, not with the intention of giving a separate exclusive commentary on it, but mainly for the purpose of substantiating his metaphysical and cosmological views. His overall understanding of this Light Verse can be summed up as follows:

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First of all, God has set forth parables to his servants, i.e. human beings, in order for them to know about Him and to become acquainted with Him, God (*ma'rifatihi*), according to the measure that He has willed of them. So by His words, God is the light of the heavens and the earth; the likeness of His light is as a niche, within which is the lamp (Q. 24: 35); God, Who is entirely inscrutable in His Essence, has revealed to them some of His knowable aspects. Moreover, He has 'made Himself (*nafsihi*) light, for it is the predicate of the subject, namely, its attribute'. This is because His very Essence (*huwiyyatuhu*) is the light – God is the Light.[3]

Nevertheless, how can the light of the lamp be related to the words, '*God is the light*'? Ibn al-'Arabī's approach and response to this crucial question appears to be holistic in the sense that he takes into account altogether the ontological, cosmological and epistemological implications, as well as the terrestrial and heavenly dimensions of the effect of the Divine Light. Light is one of God's most Beautiful Names which pertains to His Essence (*asmā' al-dhāt*). But the light as such appears to have been conditioned (*muqayyad*), or relativized, in this verse by the words '*of the heavens and the earth*', which can be understood and interpreted, according to the Shaykh, in the context, both, of God's *transcendentality* and *comparability*. In the latter sense, God is indeed '*the light of the heavens*' in relation to the intelligences or the rational faculties (*'uqūl*), and He is also '*the light of the earth*' in relation to the eyesight (*abṣār*), as He has made the attribute of His light visible and penetrative both in this physical world and the spiritual world. The reason for His likening His light to the lamp, like many of His other parables in the Quran, is to impart to us, as stated earlier, knowledge about Himself.[4] First of all He makes us manifest through His light, and then He makes Himself known to us through us.[5] His intent in the present context is likewise

3. Ibn al-'Arabī, *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, vol.I, chap.73, p.101.
4. Ibn al-'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, III:369, p.381; Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, p.38.
5. Ibn al-'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, III:369, p.381; Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, p.39.

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to remind us that as humans our *vision [and awareness]* of Him and His light is like our vision [and awareness] of the sun and the moon.

At the same time, Ibn al-'Arabī counsels, it is beyond any doubt that God, in transcendental terms, being the unconditionally Real, has no likeness whatsoever – as the Quran explicitly puts it: '*Nothing is as His likeness*' (42: 11). Although He is likened here to the lamp, in reality as in perception He transcends far beyond the vision of the lamp. That is why another Quranic verse vigorously stresses that '*Vision cannot perceive Him at all, yet He perceives the vision*' (6: 103), which suggests, according to Ibn al-'Arabī, that since God is pure Light and since light can only be perceived through light, He can then only be perceived through Him. Again, because He is sheer Light in Himself and the very source of Light for all, He perceives everything, including the perceptive tools and faculties themselves, such as the vision. On the other hand, Ibn al-'Arabī further explains, since '*He is the Subtle* (*al-Laṭīf*)' (6: 103), He is so subtly hidden in His manifestation that no one can ever know Him or witness Him as He knows and witnesses Himself.[6]

Another profound meaning that the Light Verse implies for Ibn al-'Arabī, just as it does for Anqarawī, is that 'light' refers to existence (*wujūd*), in the same way as its opposite, darkness, refers to non-existence. In so far as it manifests the Real, i.e. God, the cosmos is light, *par excellence*, and in so far as it hides Him, it is darkness. Ibn al-'Arabī also declares that, thanks to His cosmic and terrestrial light, all beings which were originally in the state of non-existence, have come into their actual existence; that is to say, they have all become manifest to us. Consequently, we *could* perceive them, in their non-existence *rationally* (*'aqlan*) through our intelligence, and *visually* (*'aynan*) through our eyes, as distinct actual beings. As far as God is concerned, however, all beings and entities are clearly manifest and entirely known to Him in both states.[7]

6. Ibn al-'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, III:369, p.380.
7. Ibn al-'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, III:369, p.380; Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, p.38.

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If we return once again to our author Anqarawī, we find him making use of much of the same mystical and theosophical technical terminology in this present commentary as Ibn al-ʿArabī in his exposition of the Light Verse. In similar fashion to Ibn al-ʿArabī's usage in his cosmological and ontological interpretive account, Anqarawī also characterizes God by the two inseparably interconnected notions of light and existence, and then proceeds to deal with one of the most central and crucial questions of philosophy and theology: 'What is the purpose of creation?' His initial response to this question, as well as his further explanations of it, dwells on the famous *ḥadīth qudsī*: 'I was a hidden treasure and I loved to be known and therefore I created the creation.' Well-known among the Sufis, it is in fact on the basis of this hadith that Anqarawī constructs his exegetical exposition – once again, along the lines of Ibn al-ʿArabī's theory of self-manifestation (*tajallī*). Among the many other mystical works which he seems to consult for the elaboration of this hadith, three take precedence: Ibn al-ʿArabī's *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* and *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, and Mawlānā's *Mathnawī*. Interestingly, however, the first two works appear not to have been mentioned anywhere by name throughout the *Miṣbāḥ*, as opposed to the latter from which several couplets are directly quoted.

Like many other Sufis, Anqarawī also goes on to connect the very purpose of creation as given in the above hadith with what the Sufis call 'the Muḥammadan Reality' (*al-Ḥaqīqa al-Muḥammadiyya*), a well-documented reality described elsewhere.[8] At this particular point, he quotes another crucial hadith, the authenticity of which has likewise been seriously questioned by many hadith critics, also placing this primordial Reality at the centre of the entire cosmos: 'The first that God created was the Intellect (*al-ʿAql*), the first that God created was the Pen (*al-Qalam*), the first that God created was my Light (*Nūrī*), and the first that God created was my Spirit (*Rūḥī*).' In

8. Among others, the following writings can be referred to for a substantial account of this notion: U. Rubin, 'Pre-existence and Light: Aspects of the concept of *Nūr Muḥammad*', *Israel Oriental Studies*, 62–119; Michel Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, pp.60–73 (chap. 4).

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citing this prophetic wisdom, Anqarawī notably aims to accomplish at least three main tasks: firstly, and above all, to provide a legitimate ground from the Islamic point of view for the creation of the universe by means of emanation; secondly, to bring the philosophers' pivotal concept of 'the First Cause' or 'the First Intellect', as well as the theologians' central notion of 'the Supreme Pen', into strict conformity with the Sufis' fundamental doctrine of the 'Muḥammadan Reality', 'Muḥammadan Spirit' or 'Muḥammadan Light'. In so doing Anqarawī intends to show that these expressions, in spite of their diversity and multiplicity, essentially and ultimately denote the one identical principle that lies behind the whole of creation, namely, the cosmic–primordial and luminous reality of Muḥammad who, although he was the last in the lineage of the prophethood in terms of his physical appearance or his earthly nature, was nevertheless the first in his spirituality or his heavenly nature. And thirdly, Anqarawī attempts to demonstrate and emphasize the formidable place of man as 'microcosm' in the creation or, to put it more aptly, the emanation of the whole world as 'macrocosm'.

As Anqarawī goes on to elaborate, the spiritual reality of Muḥammad, which is also pure light, plays two fundamental roles in the macrocosm with regard to God's self-manifestation (*tajallī*) therein: (i) as an active receptor it is the manifester (*muẓhir*) of all Divine manifestations; and (ii) as a reflective displayer it is the locus (*maẓhar*) of all loci of Divine manifestations. It is from this two-fold functional luminous-cosmic Reality that all the rest of the spiritual, celestial and corporeal beings emanate (*ṣudūr*) and flow (*fayḍ*), culminating finally with man (*insān/Ādam*) through whom the circle of the whole of existence is completed. Although man comes last in this descending hierarchy of created beings, nevertheless he is the most precious and the most privileged of all, having been amply equipped with all the exterior and interior senses, as well as the cognitive and intuitive faculties, all of which enable and entitle him to acquire and receive both the discursive knowledge (*'ilm*) and the experiential gnosis (*ma'rifa*). Anqarawī illustrates this by virtue of the famous tree–fruit parable commonly cited by the Sufis. The existence of the

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tree, which symbolizes the macrocosm, is due to, and for the sake of, the existence of the fruit, which typifies the microcosm. In other words, it is because of man's 'primordiality' (*awwaliyyatihi*) and 'belovedness' (*maḥbūbiyyatihi*) that the rest of all beings come into existence, and hence appearance. Moreover it is through man's existence that God's perfection, in terms of His Names, Attributes and Acts, comes into full manifestation.

On the basis of several prophetic traditions, Ismā'īl Anqarawī now establishes a very subtle yet quite plausible link between the heavenly nature of Muḥammad and the earthly nature of Adam. It is from God's Light that Muḥammad, or rather his heavenly nature, originates as sheer light, out of which the rest of the created beings, including Adam and all mankind, flow forth. As a result, every being in turn displays, reflects and manifests in varying degrees some portions or, more accurately, rays of that light. But all in all, since God is the sole Real, the sole Absolute, His Light, like His Knowledge, encompasses all. Such an all-encompassing light can only be acutely discerned and truly witnessed, Anqarawī declares, by an adept who has successfully completed his or her *horizontal* and *vertical* mystical journey, and consequently has attained to the station of spiritual awakening or realization, whereby he or she acquires a sort of extra dimension and thus begins, as implied in the well-known *ḥadīth qudsī*, 'seeing, hearing and acting through God'. This highest station of *baqā'* (enduring subsistence), which is in fact a necessary outcome of the station of *fanā'* (annihilation), is arrived at by the mystic traveller (*sālik*) at the very end of that steady and upwardly progressing journey where he completely obliterates his *human* existence, qualities and acts, and in their place equips and adorns himself with *Divine* existence, attributes and acts. It should be noted that Anqarawī designates 'this new sublime state' as a kind of 'luminous existence' (*wujūd nūrānī*), which he interprets further as 'self-awareness' and 'self-experiential knowledge' (*al-ma'ārif al-dhawqiyya* granted instantly by God to the Sufi adept who has attained to this station. After this the realities of God's Names and Attributes are gradually unveiled to him, as well as the mysteries latent in the two

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worlds – the microcosmic world within man and the macrocosmic world beyond the confines of man. So long as the Sufi remains at such a lofty state of luminosity, he goes on to witness the essential unity (*waḥda*) in the apparent plurality (*kathra*) of the world, so much so that God alone as the Real (*al-Ḥaqq*) discloses His Essence to him as sufficient proof of Himself and His Oneness. Consequently, he sees Him in the creation and, at the same time, the creation through Him. Finally, the real meaning of *tawḥīd* becomes crystal clear to him, just as it was already well known to the eminent Sufi master Junayd al-Baghdādī: 'Separation together with union is *tawḥīd*'. This could be translated, according to Ibn al-'Arabī's *tawḥīdī* paradigm, as the witnessing of God simultaneously everywhere and nowhere, both as transcendent and immanent.

The attainment of such a lofty state, however, is ultimately a direct bestowal of God upon His servant, who has already travelled the painstaking spiritual journey of the Sufi path with the utmost devotion and love. God may even grant him more favours, such as the hidden knowledge of deep mysteries and the profound subtleties of divinity. Therefore, anyone who happens to be in such an extraordinary situation, Anqarawī warns, must never divulge these mysteries to those who are self-conceited and heedless of God (*ahl al-ightirār*), lest they attempt to discredit them. For it is only the gnostics and the Learned of God who can better appreciate the inestimable value of those hidden mysteries and subtleties. Anqawarī suggests that it is likewise these same people, and those who follow in their footsteps, who can best grasp the mysterious dimensions of the Light Verse which we have been discussing.

Throughout the *Miṣbāḥ al-Asrār* we find Anqarawī to be very consistent in his selection and identification of words relating to the possible meanings of the Light Verse. In explaining the first part of the verse, '*God is the light of the heavens and the earth*', he first refers to God as the real light, which should not be restricted to the *physical* light, and then interprets it, in accordance with the ideas of those whom he calls 'the truth-verifying people' (*ahl al-taḥqīq*), most likely the Sufis: the heavens (*al-samāwāt*) as 'spirits' or 'spiritual beings'

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(*al-arwāḥ*), and the earth (*al-arḍ*) as 'bodies' or 'corporeal beings' (*al-ajsām*). And although God may seem to be immanent and hidden (*bāṭin*) in all spiritual and corporeal beings, He is at the same time manifest (*ẓāhir*) as light by means of the self-disclosure of His Essence, Names and Attributes onto all of them. His manifestness as light appears in the heavens as a form of knowledge that He grants to the spirits, rendering to them an awareness of, and knowledgeability in, realities; and on the earth it appears as a kind of potency that He gives to the corporeal forms and which empowers them for action. All in all, just as His Light encompasses and imbues all of these beings, so too does God's Power and Knowledge encompass and imbue all that exists, both vertically and horizontally, between the heavens and the earth.

Thus, for Anqarawī as much as for al-Ghazālī, the heavenly and earthly existence of all beings, as well as their physical and spiritual perceptibility, depends exclusively on God, Whose Essence (*al-dhāt*) and Existence (*al-wujūd*) are identical with His Light (*al-nūr*). In clarifying this point within the context of Ibn al-'Arabī's metaphysics, Anqarawī states that the individuation and appearance in the world of all beings is due to their pre-existence as immutable entities (*al-a'yān al-thābita*) in God's mind. In other words, all potential beings were at one time in the darkness of non-existence, and known therein only to God, before emerging from those immutable entities into actual existence and full appearance – when, by the grace of the light of God, they all become visible and perceivable to the human eye.

In explaining the second part of the verse, '*The similitude of His Light is like a niche within which is a lamp; and the lamp is within a glass*', our commentator dwells at length on the possible figurative meanings of the three pivotal terms, 'lamp', 'niche' and 'glass', and again interprets them at both microcosmic and macrocosmic levels. At the microcosmic or human level, he believes that the lamp (*al-miṣbāḥ*) stands for the Divine spirit (*al-rūḥ al-ilāhī*), the niche (*al-mishkāt*) for the soul (*al-nafs*), and the glass (*al-zujāj*) for the heart (*al-qalb*). At the macrocosmic or worldly level, the lamp represents 'the immutable

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entities', the niche 'the forms of all possible beings (*mumkināt*) and all created beings (*mukawwināt*)', and the glass 'all the worldly spirits (*arwāḥ al-'awālim*) and all the celestial souls (*nufūs al-falakiyyāt*)'.

In Anqarawī's formulation the three essential components of the human being – the spirit, the soul and the heart – appear as subtly interconnected with one another, operating somewhat mysteriously in the body. He clearly states that the nature of the spirit will always remain a hidden secret to ordinary people, though it may be partially known to the prophets and saints. Despite its enigmatic nature, we can still observe its primary function in the human body. This Divine spirit can also be designated in philosophical terms as 'the rational soul' (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqa*), and it functions as a lamp which casts its light, namely its control, over the entire human body, operating therein as an agent which exercises its authority through the intermediary of the animal soul, and in turn maintains the vitality of the corporeal body.

To put it in more concrete terms, the Divine spirit – luminous and sublime as it is – resembles the lamp, while the soul – in its worldly darkness – is like the niche. In between the two there lies the fluctuating heart, which like the glass has two faces – one looking to the side of the spirit and the other to that of the soul. For the sake of intelligibility, we may simply combine them as the lamp of the spirit, the niche of the soul and the glass of the heart. The lamp-like spirit projects its light on the glass-like heart, which in turn transmits it to the niche-like soul, which then spreads it over the whole human body. But, as Anqarawī remarks, in order that the heart may perform such an important role of transmission between the two, i.e. the spirit and the soul, it should be polished and brightened in such a way that both of its faces must be transparent for the light to pass through. This can only be achieved, he emphasizes, through the constant remembrance (*dhikr*) of God. In other words, it is only through the remembrance of God that the heart becomes purified and transformed into a crystal-clear mirror, reflecting the light that it receives from the spirit directly to the soul and the body. Thus, the condition of the soul and the body depends exclusively on the

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state of the heart's enlightenment by the spirit, which can only be accomplished by remembrance of God.

It is for this reason that Anqarawī, like many other Sufis, puts a great deal of emphasis on the remembrance of God, as he deems it essential not only for the cleansing of the soul of all impurities, but also for the reception of the light that emanates from the Divine disclosure. Moreover, it is the remembrance of God that eventually transforms the heart with its talisman-like ability into a pristine vessel worthy of receiving the Divine glances and illuminations. Such a polished heart, praised by the Prophet Muḥammad as 'the most compassionate and gentle' and 'the dearest to God', has in fact attained to the state of full illumination, namely self-satisfaction, tranquillity and peace. In contrast to this purified heart is the one which has become hardened and darkened due to its enslavement to the lusts and bestial desires of the carnal soul. It remains in its miserable and light-starved condition until it becomes refined and polished by the remembrance of God, which inclines it towards the light of the lamp-like spirit and makes of it a shiny mirror capable of receiving and reflecting the Divine glances and disclosures.

When the Divine disclosures are presented to the purified heart of the mystic traveller, in varying degrees of intensity, these revelations may instantly engender a state of immense bewilderment and awesome ecstasy, sometimes leading the mystic into a nearly unconscious state subsequently rendering him incapable of performing his obligations. Consequently, these disclosures, though they generate great spiritual pleasure, may draw a thin luminous veil (*al-ḥijāb al-nūrānī*) over the heart of the mystic, thus hindering him from attaining to the highest stage of the spiritual journey, the station of essential union (*aḥadiyyat al-jamʿ*), at which he unfailingly and incessantly beholds God – and God alone. In such a situation, the Sufi traveller is cautioned by Anqarawī to avert his fixed gaze from the dazzling rays of the disclosures.

In whatever fashion these disclosures may be manifested, the centre of all these Divine manifestations is, of course, the heart itself, which is symbolized in the Light Verse, as we have already seen,

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by the glass. As a result of its refinement and illumination through the remembrance of God, the heart is transformed into what the verse describes as, '*a brilliant star*' which is '*lit from a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would nearly glow even if no fire touches it. Light upon light.*' Our author goes on to identify the blessed tree (*shajara mubāraka*) with 'knowledge' (*'ilm*), and its oil with 'gnosis', i.e. 'the self-experiential knowledge of God' (*ma'rifat Allāh*). In other words, the tree stands for knowledge in general, whereas its fruit, the olive, together with the oil which comes from it, represents gnosis. Between these two there is a clear-cut distinction. While 'knowledge', as Anqarawī defines it, is the perception of a thing by means of its form which occurs in the perceiver's mind, 'gnosis' is the comprehension of a thing in itself and by virtue of itself. If both are applied to God, the knowledge pertains to His Attributes, whereas the gnosis concerns directly His Essence. On the other hand, the possessor of gnosis, known as the gnostic (*'ārif*), is in the privileged position of being directly acquainted with God through his self-experience and hence is united with the object of his gnosis; while the possessor of knowledge, called the learned one (*'ālim*), acquires it through study and hence is distinct from the object of his knowledge. In the final analysis, gnosis is commended as a kind of spiritual taste for the one who receives it, while knowledge is viewed as a veil for its perceiver.

According to Anqarawī, if looked at from a spiritual perspective, the blessed tree signifies the Divine Knowledge (*al-'Ilm al-Rabbānī*), the fountainhead of all knowledge, which is the primary source of all the bounties and favours for this world, as well as for the hereafter. The moment the lamp of the governing spirit or the niche of the animal spirit (i.e. the soul) is kindled and illuminated by the oil originating from the tree of the Divine Knowledge, it immediately projects its light into the glass of the heart, turning it into a luminescent star. So, the illumination of the entire human body depends mainly on the illumination of the heart by the gnosis received from that of the Divine Knowledge, which is completely beyond time and space – *neither of the east nor of the west* – nor yet from the spirits of

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the Orient or from the bodies of the Occident, but rather emanating directly from God Himself.

As for the fire (*nār*), for Anqarawī it refers to 'God's self-disclosure' (*al-tajallī*) to the pure hearts of the prophets, saints and gnostics – as, for instance, to Moses on the Mount (Q. 20: 10). The result of such disclosure or theophany is the burning away of all the worldly and other-worldly veils; the Sufi who experiences it is consequently transformed, in Quranic terms, into '*light upon light*' (*nūr 'alā nūr*), that is, 'joy upon joy', becoming like a newborn person, completely liberated from all concerns and anxieties. However, this 'rebirth' cannot be achieved by oneself, but only under the strict care and profound guidance of a spiritual master (*dalīl*), whose penetrative insight (*'ayn al-himma*) makes such attainment possible in the end.

Commenting on the last part of the verse, '*God guides to His Light whoever He wills and God puts forward similes (examples) for mankind, and God has knowledge of all things*', Anqarawī starts by devoting considerable space to the various meanings of 'guidance' (*hidāya*) and then attempts to provide, in his estimation, a rationally tenable explanation of God's overall role in man's choice of faith. At the very outset he establishes a crucial connection between 'light' and 'guidance' by referring to a Prophetic saying, as recorded in several Hadith collections, in slightly varying versions: 'Verily, God created the creation in darkness (*ẓulma*) and then sprinkled of His light upon it. Whoever attains that light finds guidance (*ihtadā*), and whoever misses it goes astray from the right path.'

In its apparent meaning, the term 'light', when used in the sense of 'guidance', denotes 'existence', which God bestows, from His Essence, Attributes and Acts, upon all possible beings, in accordance with their respective aptitudes as originally required by their immutable entities. Again, in this particular sense, all the faculties and properties, such as 'life', 'knowledge', 'will', 'hearing', 'speech', etc., constitute integral elements of such an existence. In spite of this, Anqarawī, following Ibn al-'Arabī, clearly states that all of these so-called beings cannot be considered *real beings*, especially in the eyes of the truth-verifying people (*ahl al-taḥqīq*), namely the Sufis,

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saints and gnostics, all of whom are equipped and blessed with God's particular grace, which consists of 'gnosis' (*al-ma'rifa*), 'love' (*al-maḥabba*), and 'essential true unity' (*al-tawḥīd al-ḥaqqānī al-dhātī*).

Therefore, in another of its meanings 'guidance' signifies, according to our author, 'the attainment of self-annihilation and self-realization through journeying on the spiritual path', or, in the true sense of the term, the straight path (*al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*). Anqarawī nevertheless goes on to explain that, although the attainment of such a sublime state of self-consciousness, as well as the actual progression on the path, are possible only through God's will (*mashiyyat Allāh*), at the beginning His servant should seek after and pray for His guidance, and travel towards Him through his own efforts.

On closer observation we can see how our commentator, by means of this subtle interpretation, endeavours to link (though not very convincingly) God's *real* Existence, Omnipotence, Omniscience, and Universal Will with man's *imaginary* existence, limited power, finite knowledge, and particular will. In other words, man asks for guidance, wills it for himself, and exerts his efforts to attain it, but in the end God still only grants it if and to whomsoever He wills, according to His own wisdom – for He is all-Knowing (*al-'Alīm*) and all-Wise (*al-Ḥakīm*). On the other hand, man is by all means urged to continue to reflect on these intricate theological questions concerning the operation and evolution of God's Will and Wisdom in the world, but on the condition that he always bear in mind, as the Quran states, '*He cannot be questioned for His acts*', since God, as the all-Wise, puts everything in its rightful place. After all, the existence of good as well as of evil, the existence of belief as well as of disbelief, the existence of guidance as well as of error, and the existence of truth as well as of falsehood, are all constituent parts of the manifestation of His Wisdom in the cosmos. Besides, all these are necessary, Anqarawī asserts, for the creation and performance of human beings in this world.

However, because all these crucial matters apparently involve the secrets of the Divine destiny (*sirr al-qadar*), they cannot be resolved and explained with accuracy to the satisfaction of the human mind,

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or by human reasoning. To avoid further complications our author proposes, instead of merely adopting the human vantage point, that one should consider them in relation to God's all-inclusive wisdom, within which everything has its own place. As such, His wisdom requires that some people be in a state of belief, while others are in that of disbelief. The latter state, though unfavourable and harmful to man, is wisdom in relation to God.

Is there a way then for man to glimpse, however briefly, the mystery-laden wisdom of God? Anqarawī's position in relation to such a hypothetical question appears somewhat ambivalent, if not altogether negative. He believes that it is only those who have attained to such lofty states of self-realization, and have thus removed the veils from the interior eyes of their hearts – only they are able to witness the reality behind all matter. However, such an elevated state – which Anqarawī identifies as 'guidance' in the most profound sense of the term, hence true guidance – is still God's prerogative to grant to those who are deserving of it. For travellers on the path, the removal of the veils comes about at the end of their spiritual journey, yet the unveiling to them of the true nature of a thing is primarily a favour from God.

After all, those who possess the required aptitude for this guidance of unveiling, as well as those who do not possess it, are known to God in pre-eternity – as the concluding part of the verse indicates: '*God does know all things*'. His Knowledge, being identical with His very Essence, leaves nothing outside of its scope; on the contrary, it encompasses the totality of everything – all that is visible and invisible, all that is existing and non-existing. God's way of knowing cannot be comparable to the way human beings know, Anqarawī stresses, for, in the case of human beings, all knowledge depends on the objects to be known, as they know them either through the objects themselves, or by something else. As for God, He knows them all in the same way as He knows His own Essence, which means that for Him both knowledge and the object to be known signify one and the same thing.

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Brief descriptions of the manuscripts

D1 Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Düğümlü Baba, no. 10

This manuscript consists of 15 folios (1–15 fols.) and the number of lines on each page varies between 16 and 17. The text was written in very neat *taʿlīq* script in black ink. The Quranic verses, the *aḥādīth*, as well as the utterances of the Sufi masters, are mostly vowelled. Neither the name of the copyist nor the date of the transcription is mentioned. However, the small metrical composition of Anqarawī, placed at the end of this manuscript under the title of 'Nev Güfte-i Ismāʿīl Efendī Şāriḥ-i Müşkilāt-i Mesnevī', may lead us to assume that it was very likely copied during the lifetime of its author.

D2 Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Düğümlü Baba, no. 370/1

This manuscript consists of 11 folios (1–11 fols.) and each page contains 23 lines, except the first which has only 20. The text was written in clear *riqʿa* script in black ink. All the Quranic verses, the *aḥādīth*, the utterances of the Sufi masters, the titles of the chapters and the proper names are marked with a line over them. On the very first page (i.e. 1a), just after the citation of the glorification of God and the salutation of the Prophet, both preceded by the statement of *basmala*, is a note stating that this book (containing a few other small treatises along with the *Miṣbāḥ*) was bequeathed as a religious endowment by a certain Sayyid Ismāʿīl Ṣādiq Kamāl in the hope of consecrating its reward and blessing to the spirits of both his deceased father, al-Ḥājj Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Wajīh Pāshā, and mother, al-Ḥājja Muslima Khānum, in the year 1284/1867.

M1 Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Hacı Mahmud Efendi, no. 2872/1

This copy consists of 14 folios (1–14 fols.) and each page contains 19 lines. The text was written in clear *riqʿa* script in black ink with chapter headings in red ink. The name of the copyist is not mentioned. Its completion date is given as Shaʿbān 1035/April 1626 in the

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colophon. Throughout the text some of the more complicated terms appear to have been vowelled. This particular manuscript, the earliest copy, has been taken as the basis for editing the Arabic text and the others have been collated with it.

M2 Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Hacı Mahmud Efendi, no. 2544

This copy consists of 9 folios (1–9 fols.) and each page contains 27 lines, except for the first which has 22 lines, and the last which has 19. The text was written in a quite legible style of *riq'a* script in black ink. All the proper names, the verses of the Quran, the *aḥādīth* of the Prophet, and the utterances of the Sufi masters are marked with a line over them. Chapter headings are marked in bold script. Both the name of copyist and the date of transcription have been explicitly stated in the colophon as follows: 'On 9 Rabī'u'l-Ākhir, 1286/20 July 1869 it was transcribed by the hand of the humble God-remembering (*dhākir*) dervish, As'ad ibn al-Ḥājj Ibrāhīm Ḥilmī, may God forgive both of them!'

L Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Lala Ismā'īl, no. 213/1

This copy consists of 11 folios (1–11 fols.) and the number of lines on each page varies between 23 and 27. The text was written in a very neat yet somewhat thick and broken *riq'a* script. With the exception of a few exclamatory phrases and chapter headings, which are distinguished in red, the whole text is written in black ink. All the Quranic verses, Prophetic sayings and Sufi utterances are marked with a line over them. The name of the copyist is not mentioned. The date of its transcription is given in the colophon as 1130/1717.

V Biblioteca Vaticana, Turchi, no. 137/1

This consists of 6 folios (2–8 fols.) with 35 lines on each page, except for the first and the last, which have 27 and 11 lines respectively. It is written in clear *naskh* script, also displaying some features of *qirma* script. The ownership statement is dated as 1223/1808–09 at the head of the opening page. The name of the copyist is not mentioned.

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Part II

Translation of The Lamp of Mysteries (*Miṣbāḥ al-Asrār*)

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Introduction

In the Name of God, the All-Compassionate, the Most Merciful

Praise be to God Who illuminates the bosoms of gnostics with the lights emanating from the knowledge of His Essence – the simile of His Light therein is like a niche in which there is a lamp – and Who adorns the hearts of those immersed in the oceans of the mysteries of His Attributes with the precious pearls of sciences. Thus their hearts turn, in their luminosity and clarity, as if they were shining stars. May the blessings of the One, Who splits the dawns[1] and creates the [heavenly] bodies [and the forms] every day and night, be upon His Prophet Muḥammad, who is the beloved of the One Who opens, the One Who removes all that is dislikeable and discloses all that is likeable; and upon the members of his pure and noble family, all of whom guide to the path of success and deliverance; as well as upon his eminent companions who illuminate the sphere of prosperity and righteousness like shining stars.

To begin with, this ailing, thirsty, humble dervish, Shaykh Ismāʿīl al-Mawlawī Anqarawī – may God disclose to him both phenomenal and spiritual secrets – states: As I was one day reciting the Book of God, the most High and all-Forgiving, I came as far as the Light Verse where I lingered for some time, then pondered upon it so deeply that I plunged into the depths of its mysteries, from which I extracted certain subtle and sublime meanings and precious gems in abundance, the likes of which are hardly to be found even in the treasury-like hearts of the masters of the spiritual path, let alone in the houses of the utterly destitute. Thereupon my heart was moved

1. Cf. 'He splits the sky into dawn and has made the night for a repose and the sun and moon for a reckoning (of time). Such is the judgement or the ordaining of God' Quran 6:96.

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with exaltation and my mind was relieved of anxiety, and I felt as though I had found a *lost wisdom*[2] without exerting any effort.

After this, I had recourse to several exegeses of the Quran, such as *al-Qāḍī*,[3] *al-Kashshāf*,[4] and *Maʿālim al-Tanzīl*,[5] seeking to obtain from them whatever might be available to this ailing and thirsty man [as I am]. Yet I was only able to find a few of those meanings [which had occurred to me before]. Now, having been utterly bewildered and overwhelmed with profuse tears, I lamented [to myself]: 'How strange! Why is it that no one amongst the people of realities and virtues has composed any books or treatises on such a fine, eloquent and articulate verse as this? What a pity! Why is it that they have not turned their insights upon the scrutiny of its mysteries? Why is it that they have not turned their sights [and attentions] to removing the veils from it?'

Nevertheless, one day I came upon a treatise containing the realities of certain mysteries, entitled the *Mishkāt al-Anwār*;[6] which

2. Allusion is made to one of the famous Prophetic sayings: 'Wisdom is the lost property of the believer; hence, wherever he finds it, he is the most entitled to [obtain] it', Al-ʿAjlūnī, *Kashf al-Khafāʾ*, 1:435, hadith no. 1159. See also, for alternative versions of it, Al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb* (trans. R.A. Nicholson), 517/15; Furūzānfar, *Aḥādīth-i Mathnawī*, p. 57.

3. i.e. *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa Asrār al-Taʾwīl* by al-Qāḍī al-Bayḍawī (d.791/1388).

4. i.e. *al-Kashshāf ʿan Ḥaqāʾiq al-Tanzīl wa-ʿUyūn al-Aqāwīl fī Wujūh al-Taʾwīl* by Ibn ʿUmar Zamakhsharī (d.545/1150).

5. i.e. *Maʿālim al-Tanzīl* by al-Ḥusayn ibn Masʿūd al-Baghawī (d.516/1122?).

6. This is one of the most celebrated works by Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (450/1059 – 505/1111), which he composed as an exegesis on the same Light Verse (Q. 24:35) and the famous hadith concerning the veils of light and darkness. Until now the work has appeared in its original Arabic in two different editions: one by Abū'l-ʿAlā ʿAfīfī under the title of *Mishkāt al-Anwār*; the other by Riyāḍ Muṣṭafa ʿAbdullāh under the title of *Mishkāt al-Anwār wa Miṣbāḥ al-Asrār*. It has also been translated into several languages, including: in English, *Al-Ghazzali's Mishkāt al-Anwār*, trans. W.H.T. Gairdner (1924), and reprints (1952 and 1991); this earliest, rather dull, translation has been far surpassed in terms of accuracy and intelligibility by David Buchman's fresh rendition and valuable annotation (*The Niche of Lights*), published as part of the Islamic Translation Series; in French, *Le Tabernacle des Lumières* (*Michkât al-Anwâr*), trans. Roger Deladrière; in German, *Die Nische der Lichter*, trans. ʿAbd-Elṣamad ʿAbd-Elḥamīd Elschazlī.

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was composed by the great and learned Imām and Proof of Islām [al-Ghazālī]. Although he set down therein various types of gnosis in the language of the philosophers, and elaborated various clusters of subtleties in the terminology of the gnostics, I did not find any of the mysteries that God had already unveiled to me. For the Quran is an overflowing ocean and an ever-radiating sun:[7] [even] '*If all the trees on earth were pens and the ocean (were ink) with seven oceans behind it to add to its (supply)*',[8] the mysteries of the Words of God, the Exalted and the all-Forgiving, would never be exhausted. Therefore, my intention was to string together in a proper order all the pearls and jewels I then possessed. Thus I brought them together, and then placed them one by one, [interweaving them] in an orderly fashion and on a single thread, lest any should be lost, due to possible negligence, delay or laxity. In this way, all of these would come to serve as [exquisite] necklaces for the necks of the gnostics and as [precious] substances for the hearts of the dervishes who follow the Sultan of saints, the Proof of the purified people, the Pole of the guiding sphere, the Core of the successive circle [of sainthood], the Peacock of the gardens of the Divine Realities, the Ocean of the pearl-like mysteries pertaining to [the states of] annihilation and subsistence, namely, the eminent Mawlānā[9] – may God bless us by the truths of his most delightful discourse as well as by the mysteries of his most sublime essence. A couplet:

He is the aim, the sought after, the begged and hoped for
His name is the cure for the love-struck
He is the soother of the anxious and the treasure of hope
From Him the love-struck obtains what he yearns for.

O Lord! Just as You have enlightened the mirror-like breasts of the righteous by the lamp of the mysteries of the *Mathnawī*, so illuminate too, by the spiritual lights of the latter, the depths of our

7. Cf. al-Ghazālī, *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān wa Duraruh*.
8. Q. 31:27.
9. i.e. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī.

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inner hearts and the sight[s] of our inner eyes, as well as those of our brethren of this world and of the other world.

I have called this treatise the *Miṣbāh al-Asrār [the Lamp of Mysteries]* and enfolded[10] it within four chapters: the first deals with 'light' and its nature; the second with the 'lamp', the 'niche' and the 'glass'; the third with the 'blessed olive tree'; and the fourth with 'guidance' from the beginning to the end.[11]

I beg of the gnostics and the virtuous to forgive me and to pass over the errors that may have resulted from the deficiency of my pen, and the slips that may have been caused by my careless steps; for, as is quite obvious to many people, to attain success in bringing God's mysteries to light is difficult indeed. May God nourish us and all our brethren with pure beverages,[12] and grant light in our hearts, for our ears and eyes, as well as all our exterior and interior organs![13]

10. The original Arabic phrase reads as *ṭawaytuhā*, which means approximately 'I have folded it', by which the author seems to convey firstly the idea of tucking away the secrets that he has gathered within the fold, and secondly, that of providing an effective medicine in the form of a prescription retained in an envelope.

11. *Min al-bidāya ilā al-nihāya*: from the origin of creation to the very last day.

12. The allusion is probably to the Quranic verse 76:21.

13. These concluding supplicatory formulae appear to echo one of the celebrated Prophetic sayings, recorded in almost all the authentic Hadith canonical collections. For the full version of the hadith, refer to *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī, Daʿawāt 9; *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Muslim, Musāfirūn, 181, 187 and 189; *Sunan* of Abū Dāwūd, Taṭawwuʿ, 36; *Sunan* of al-Tirmidhī, Daʿawāt, 30; *Musnad* of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, 1: 284, 343, 352, 373.

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Chapter One
On the nature of light

Know that the term 'light', in the lexicon, stands for that quality which is effused from the sun, the moon and the fire and falls on the earth and the wall, and others besides these two. This quality as such, according to the literalists, can in no way be a god, nor can it even be used to refer to God except by way of allegorical interpretation. According to the truth-verifying people, however, the real light is nothing other than the Divine Essence, for it is one of the Essential Names. Thus [for them] the application of light to anything other than That Essence is possible only in a metaphorical sense, since everything other than God, when considered in itself, is as a shadow or sheer darkness. This is because anything [other than God] is in itself merely complete non-existence, as the Messenger of God – may His peace and blessing be upon him – stated: 'Indeed, God created all beings in darkness, then sprinkled upon them of His Light.'[1]

Again, when he [i.e. the Prophet] was asked by a Bedouin, 'How do you know your Lord?' he replied, 'I know things through God.' In other words, [the question was] 'How do you know the Essence of your Lord?' [His response was] 'I know things through the light of my Lord.'[2] Just as the [physical] light is the cause of manifestness,

1. The full text of this Prophetic statement appears in *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, Bāb al-Īmān, 18, as follows: 'God created the creation in darkness, then He scattered some of His Light upon them. Those whom that Light reached attained guidance and those whom it missed went astray.' See also al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, pp.9–10; al-Ghazālī, *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, p.51; Buchman, *The Niche of Lights*, p.12; Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, Book I:760.

2. Another report, with some variation, is attributed to Dhū al-Nūn in the *Kitāb al-Luma'* as follows: Dhū al-Nūn was once asked, 'With what do you know God the

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and through it all visible objects can be perceived, so the Real too is the very cause of the manifestness of all beings, and through His Light and Knowledge all that exists can be perceived. Moreover, it is through [His bestowal of] witnessing that the realities of all that is contingent can be witnessed. How is it, then, that He [or His Existence] is inferred from [the existence of] other things and objects, while He Himself is the most manifest of all?[3] The light of the daybreak outshines that of the lamp [and renders it useless]. In this case, His hiddenness is due to the perfection of His [utmost]

Almighty?' He responded: 'I know God with God and I know all besides God with His Messenger, may His peace and blessing be upon him' (al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma' fi l-Taṣawwuf*, p.104). Dhū al-Nūn's same statement occurs in al-Qushayrī's *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya*, p.315, in the following form: 'With what do you know your Lord?' He replied, 'I know my Lord through my Lord. Were it not for my Lord, I would not know my Lord.' Compare this with Bāyazīd al-Biṣṭāmī's statement in al-Khālidī's *al-Ḥadā'iq al-Wardiyya*, Chap.2, p.2.

3. It is worth recalling at this point that Ghazālī has already made a distinction, in his *Mishkāt*, between the people of Insight or Intuition (*baṣīra* or *shuhūd*) and those of Induction or Reasoning (*istidlāl*) on the basis of the following Quranic verse: '*We shall show them Our signs in the horizons and in themselves (or in their souls), until it becomes manifest to them that He is the sole Reality. Does it not suffice that your Lord is witness over everything?*' (Q. 41:53). According to Ghazālī, the learned who 'are well-grounded in knowledge (*al-'ulamā' al-rāsikhūn*)' (Q. 3:7) first see objects and signs and then see God through and behind those objects and signs, whereas the people of witnessing who are endowed with the special gift of Insight and Intuition, and therefore are called 'the truthful friends of Allāh', never see a single object without first seeing God. Other than these two types, he says, there remains nothing except the people of oblivion who are veiled. For further detail see Ghazālī's *Mishkāt*, p.63 (Buchman, *The Niche of Lights*, p.23). Incidentally, one may find this very notion of 'the utmost manifestness of God and hence the futility of inferential argumentation or reasoning – whether cosmological or ontological – in proving His existence', to have been very well cultivated in the writings of Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh (d.709/1309), the third eminent Sufi master of the Shādhiliyya order. At one point, for instance, in his *Ḥikam* (*Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh's Book of Aphorisms [Kitāb al-Ḥikam]*), he elegantly states: 'What a difference between one who proceeds *from* God in his argumentation and one who proceeds inferentially *to* Him! He who has Him as his starting-point knows the Real (*al-Ḥaqq*) as It is' (p.28); also, for its Arabic version and juxtaposed French translation, see *Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh (m.709/1309) et la Naissance de la Confrérie*, p.99.

manifestness and clarity.[4] An indication so subtle in [its free] application, an expression so extraordinary in [its] meaning!

O seeker of the Divine [matters], once [you have become] acquainted with these [above-mentioned] notions, you will be able to comprehend the cause of manifestness of all that is corporeal and spiritual. Since God, in accordance with His statement, 'I was a hidden treasure, and I loved to be known',[5] willed to bring out and manifest His latent perfections from His Essence on various planes of spirits and bodies, He disclosed His Essence to His Essence, prior to the appearance of the loci of His Attributes. Thus He first manifested the manifester of all manifestations and the Light of lights, which is the very spirit of His beloved Muḥammad, the Chosen. The Sufi masters call this spirit 'the Muḥammadan Reality', whereas philosophers name it the First Intellect, the First Cause, the Supreme Pen, as is recorded in the hadith: 'The first that God created was the Intellect, the first that God created was the Pen, the first that God created was my Light, and the first that God created was my Spirit.'[6] All of these terms,

4. Cf. 'this very intensity is the cause of its invisibility' (Ghazālī, *Mishkāt*, p.62; Buchman, *The Niche of Lights*, p.22).

5. This is a very well-known and widely circulated *ḥadīth qudsī* among the Sufis; its authenticity, however, has been seriously questioned by some scholars such as Ibn Taymiyya, who directly expressed: 'It is not included among the words of the Prophet, and no chain of support, whether genuine or weak, has ever been provided for it.' Referring to such criticism, we find favourable comments for its acceptance from several prominent Hadith authorities, such as 'Alī al-Qārī, who has clearly indicated that the meaning of this hadith is genuine, chiefly because it is derived from the Quranic verse: '*I have not created jinn and mankind except to worship Me*' (Q. 51:56). 'To worship Me', says al-Qārī, means 'to know Me', as Ibn 'Abbās has expounded it (al-'Ajlūnī, *Kashf al-Khafā'*, 2:173). Besides, this hadith appears in Sufi writings, in various versions, one of which is: The Prophet David – may peace be upon him – once asked, 'Why did you create the creation?' God responded: 'I was a hidden treasure, and I desired to be known, so I created the creation in order that I might be known' (Furūzānfar, *Aḥādīth-i Mathnawī*), p.29.

6. Cf. *Kashf al-Khafā'*, 1:309–12; *Aḥādīth-i Mathnawī*, pp.113, 168, 202. The initial part of this Prophetic saying that identifies the cosmological and ontological nature of the first created entity as *'aql* and *qalam* was also cited by Ibn Sīnā (d.1037), the outstanding Muslim peripatetic philosopher, in order to support and justify his theory

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though different in expression, signify one and the same meaning, as is articulated in this poem:

> Our expressions are diverse and yet your beauty is one.
> All, after all, point to beauty.

In the same way, it [i.e. the Muḥammadan Reality] is sometimes called 'light', for it is the cause of the manifestation of the Names pertaining to [His] Essence, Attributes and Acts, as well as the cause of the manifestation of the realities pertaining to beings. And sometimes it is termed 'spirit', with reference to the quiddities of all things contingent whose comfort[7] becomes possible through it. Again, with respect to its being [an instrumental] cause for the inscription of all creatures, it is named 'pen'. Furthermore, it is also called 'the Mother of the Book' on account of its being the primordial source of all existing beings.[8] That is why God's Messenger – may the peace and blessing of God most High be upon him – has said: 'Adam and all who succeeded him came to fall under my banner; however, I take no pride.'[9] That is to say, no pride consists in these things for me, as they all sprang forth from my light. My pride lies with God, for I am of His Light.[10] Once again, he said: 'I am of the Light of God, and the believers are of my light.'[11]

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of emanation (*ṣudūr*) from the *Sharī'a* standpoint; Ibn Sīnā, 'al-Risāla al-'Arshiyya', p.255; cf. Arthur J. Arberry, *Avicenna on Theology*, p.36.

7. It is worth mentioning in this context that Anqarawī skilfully employs the term *rāḥa* (comfort) side by side with that of *rūḥ* (spirit), both of which are derivatives of the same root *rawaḥa*. Cf. the notion of *rawḥ* as given, for instance, in the verse '*never despair of God's soothing mercy* (or comfort = *rawḥ Allāh*)' (Q. 12:87).

8. Anqarawī concurs with all his Sufi predecessors by regarding the spirit of the Prophet Muḥammad as the origin and final cause of creation, a notion whose foundation probably rests on a *ḥadīth qudsī* widely circulated in Sufi circles: 'Had it not been for you [i.e. the Prophet], I would not have created the heavens.'

9. Cf. various versions of this hadith as cited in the *Mathnawī*: *Aḥādīth-i Mathnawī*, pp.110–11.

10. Anqarawī's statement seems to be mainly a paraphrase of what his spiritual progenitor Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī has articulated in the *Mathnawī*: 'Hence Muṣṭafā (Muḥammad) said, "Adam and the (other) prophets are (following) behind me under (my) banner."

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Afterwards, as a result of the effusion of His Light, God brought into appearance the ten Intellects and the Universal Soul, and then, in order, the celestial souls and their bodies, universal nature, prime matter, the four elements,[12] the three orders of generated beings,[13] and finally man.[14] For man in every respect – nominally, actually, and essentially – constitutes the cause of the appearance of all created beings.[15] It is through his existence that the perfection of the Real becomes fully manifest. Moreover, it is with his existence that the circle of existence is made complete. His existence, however, was deferred due to his 'primordiality' and 'belovedness'.[16] For in reality what is meant by the tree is the fruit.[17] A poem:

For this reason that master of (all) sorts of knowledge has uttered the allegorical saying, "We are the last and the foremost." (That is to say), "If in appearance I am born of Adam, in reality I am the forefather of (every) forefather, since the worship of the angels was (rendered) to him for my sake, and he ascended to the Seventh Heaven on my account. Therefore in reality the Father (Adam) was born of me, therefore in reality the tree was born of the fruit"' (*Mathnawī*, Book IV:525–9).

11. Cf. the hadith, 'I am of God, and the believers are of me.' *Kashf al-Khafā'*, 1:237.
12. Fire, Air, Water and Earth.
13. Mineral, Vegetable and Animal.
14. Cf. Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā': al-Ilāhiyyāt*, II:435.
15. i.e. The essence, action and name of all created beings become manifest because of the human being.
16. The human being, though he comes last in the order of manifestation, is first in terms of the goal of creation. On the other hand, the apparent delay of his coming into appearance is not because of his lowliness or closeness or inferiority; on the contrary, it is because of his 'primordiality' (*awwaliyyatihi*) and 'belovedness' (*maḥbūbiyyatihi*). Of course it is already self-evident that by using these two key concepts, Anqarawī once again seeks to emphasize the principal place of the Prophet Muḥammad in the creation of the entire cosmos. Besides, as he himself points out elsewhere, 'belovedness' is a station that is particular to the Prophet Muḥammad, as that of 'love' (*maḥabba*) is particular to the Prophet Moses. (See further, Anqarawī, *Futūḥāt-i 'Ayniyya*, p. 161.)
17. Cf. the following verses from the *Mathnawī* (Book IV:522–4):

    Externally the branch is the origin of the fruit; intrinsically the branch came into existence for the sake of the fruit.

    If there had not been desire and hope of the fruit, how should the gardener have planted the root of the tree?

    Therefore in reality the tree was born of the fruit, (even) if in appearance it (the fruit) was generated by the tree.

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All beings are like a mirror, yet it is not polished,
The face of the Lord of Majesty and Beauty appeared there not in perfect form
Thus Adam has become the polisher of that mirror and through him His Essence and Attributes have become visible
[Now] this circle has become perfect and this last [point] has become the very First.

Another sign of the superiority of man lies in the fact that, in the macrocosm [i.e. the universe], the faculties pertaining to souls and bodies alone are acquired, whereas in the world of man [i.e. microcosm] those faculties are attained pertaining to the spirits, including numerous mysteries embodied in various sorts of *experiential knowledge*[18] and religious subtleties, as well as many sciences involving certitude. Then take a closer look! Which one of the two[19] is purer? Such a well-established principle, such a fresh insight!

If you, O traveller on the spiritual path, desire to witness this greatest and all-encompassing Light, in which all [other] lights are completely immersed, then you must strive hard so as to obliterate your essence, attributes and actions in the Real. For *fanā'* is the [station of] obliteration of all that is other than the Real in the Real, a station where all besides Him turns into absolute non-existence; so much so that none but the Real remains worthy of [bearing] a name, an attribute and an essence. The significance of this station appears to be substantiated in this verse: '*God bears witness that there is no god*

Here the fruit stands for the spirit of Muḥammad, which was the first to be created, while the tree symbolizes the Prophet Adam, who proceeded, like all other prophets, from the spirit or light of the former. Cf. the hadith: 'In creation I was the first of all the prophets and will be the last of them in resurrection' (*Aḥādīth-i Mathnawī*, p. 111).

18. The original Arabic text reads as *al-ma'ārif al-dhawqiyya*, the literal rendition of which is 'knowledge of taste' or 'tasteful knowledge'. I have translated this phrase as 'experiential knowledge' because, for Anqarawī as for many other Sufis, *dhawq* is a comprehensive concrete direct experience.

19. i.e. Man and universe.

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but He.'[20] That is, the Oneness of His Essence is [witnessed] by His Essence.

Now the servant at this station becomes existent through the Existence of the Real, subsistent through His Subsistence, alive through His Life, and learned through His Knowledge. Then God wraps him in the robe of His noble attributes and establishes for him, by His favour, an existence so luminous that he cannot revert to [his previous state of] existence [of darkness], which would in effect obstruct him from witnessing unity in plurality.[21] As a result, he begins to behold through God, hear through God, and act through His actions; and above all, he looks upon the Real along with the creation, and vice-versa. Finally, he sees the Real by virtue of His essential disclosure as self-evident and sees His divinity by virtue of His nominal and attributive disclosure.

O Sufi traveller! When you have tasted this state [of elation] by self-experience and self-awareness and not through [acquired] knowledge [of exoteric sciences] and [intuited] cognizance [of esoteric sciences], you will certainly attain to the ultimate [end] beyond which lies no other [end] within the bounds of creation. So, you should never exhaust yourself and neither should you be greedy at all, for what lies behind it is but sheer nothingness; as they say: 'There is no village beyond 'Abbādān'.[22] For the ultimate destination of all Sufis journeying towards God is the very Essence [of Him], and nothing else.

20. Quran 3:18; cf. the author's similar explanation of this verse in his *Futūḥāt-i 'Ayniyya*, pp.119–20.

21. Cf. Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh, *K. al-Ḥikam*, p.217, couplet no.18.

22. This is an island on the Persian Gulf, near Baṣra, where one of the earliest *ribāṭ*s (mystic frontier-convents) is reported to have been founded, and in which a group of ascetics gathered around the then prominent Sufi 'Abd al-Wāḥid b. Zayd (d.177/793) to live a life of solitude and practise self-discipline (L. Massignon, *Essai*), p.135. This name later became used as a synonym for 'ascetic community'; Rūmī for instance cites it in the *Mathnawī*, Book II:3788–9: 'Amidst the desert lived an ascetic, absorbed in devotion like the people of 'Abbādān. The pilgrims from (different) countries arrived there: their eyes fell upon the parched ascetic.'

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These are mysteries that can only be comprehended by the learned of God and the gnostics who are [closely] acquainted with the realities of His Names. For they involve a kind of knowledge and mystery that is hidden and kept in reserve, to which the beloved and the possessor of sciences alluded when he said: 'Of knowledge there is one [specific] type which is kept in a hidden store and which none save the learned of God could know, and if they articulate it, none save the heedless [of God] would deny it.'[23] It is, therefore, incumbent upon the gnostic-traveller, whenever he encounters the heedless, to safeguard these mysteries, since they can be grasped only by one who is thoroughly acquainted with the various descending gradations of existence and who gives everything its rightful due as decreed by the Real most High and who never puts anything in a place other than its own.[24] Junayd[25] – may God's mercy be upon him – said on this subject: 'Union without separation is heresy; separation without union is association; and separation with union is unification (*tawḥīd*).'[26] A couplet:

23. This is a saying attributed to the Prophet and is also included verbatim in the *Mishkāt* of al-Ghazālī (see *Mishkāt*, p.61; Buchman, *The Niche of Lights*, p.21). This hidden knowledge remains far beyond the domain of intelligence and may not be accepted by the heedless and the strict followers of *formal* knowledge, for, as this expression indicates, 'Man is the enemy of that of which he is ignorant (*al-mar'u 'aduwwun limā jahila*)', Anqarawī, *Minhāj al-Fuqarā'*, p.211.

24. Cf. '*He said: Our Lord is He Who gave to each (created) thing its form and nature, and further; gave (it) guidance*' (Q. 20:50).

25. Abū al-Qaṣim al-Junayd al-Baghdādī (d.298/910–11); for details of his life, writings and mystical ideas, see Ali Hassan Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd*; Roger Deladrière, *Junayd Sayyid al-Ṭā'ifa: Enseignement spirituel.*

26. For details of this aphorism see Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī, *The 'Awārif al-Ma'ārif*, trans. by W. Clarke, p.139. In this work, the expression appears exactly in the same form yet without Junayd's name being cited for its authorship. In his *Kitāb al-Luma'*, al-Sarrāj, on the other hand, quotes it along with other sayings regarding 'mystical union', with the omission of the last part and without attributing it to any author. 'Every union without separation is heresy; every separation without union is transcendence' (al-Sarrāj, *K. al-Luma'*, p.212). In the meantime, for Junayd's celebrated saying about *tawḥīd*, see '*Ifrād al-Qadīm 'an al-muḥdath*' (isolation of the Eternal from the temporal), Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd*, p.70; see also for an elaboration of this saying, Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism*, pp.29ff.

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Every degree of existence has its own order
If you fail to maintain the degrees, you would be a heretic.[27]

In conclusion, since you have understood the meaning of light, you must now [try to] comprehend the explanation of [the meanings of] the heavens and the earth. According to the truth-verifying people, 'heavens' means spirits and 'earth' means bodies. What is then intended here can be summed up as follows: God illumines all spirits and bodies by His Knowledge [of them] and by manifesting His Power [upon them]. He is immanent in all bodies, as He is in all spirits. This being the case, both the heavens and the earth, as well as all that exists in between them horizontally and vertically, are never devoid of the lights of His Names, Attributes and Essence, as the Messenger of God – may the peace and the blessings of God be upon him – has said: 'Should you throw out a rope, it definitely falls on [the land of] God.'[28]

The Real is like light; the immutable persistent entities[29] are like figure[s] [i.e. individual beings]; and all the worlds are like the shadows of those figures. Thus, the shadow has existence only through the figure, and the latter in turn is perceived only with light. By the same token, the universe has existence only through the immutable persistent entities, while the latter are conceived only by the Real.[30] [Because of this] God Most High says: '*Have you not turned your vision to your Lord, how he has stretched out the shadow? Had He so willed, He could have made it stationary.*' That is to say, He

27. For the couplet, see 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, *Lawā'iḥ: A treatise on Sufism*, p.25.

28. If the Arabic term *ḥabl* is understood in the sense of 'beam' or 'ray', then this statement should be rendered as follows: 'Should you cast a beam of light, verily it falls on God.'

29. *Al-a'yān al-thābita*, permanent entities or archetypes; essences of possibilities. For an elegant and systematic study that elucidates the multi-faceted roles of these entities in the theosophy of Ibn al-'Arabī, see Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, pp.159–96.

30. Cf. Ibn al-'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, p.99; trans. R.W.J. Austin, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, pp.117–18.

could have kept the shadow [perpetually] hidden in the darkness of nothingness. [And He continues by saying,] '*Then We have appointed the sun to be a guide to it.*'[31] This is an allusion to the same meaning [as above]. At this stage, there are many more mysteries; however, it would not be appropriate to reveal them all here, due to the lack of comprehension on the part of certain people. May peace be upon the one who follows the guidance and the path of the Leader of humanity!

31. Q. 25:45. Compare Anqarawī's exegesis of this verse with that of Ibn al-'Arabī in the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, pp. 102–3 (*Bezels of Wisdom*, p. 124).

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Chapter Two
On the lamp, the niche and the glass

Know that, according to the philosophers, the world is threefold:[1]

1. On the triple division of the worlds, Anqarawī seems to follow verbatim Suhrawardī, who had already made this division in his *Hayākil al-Nūr*, with which Anqarawī was very well acquainted. However, as Ghiyāth al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, one of the commentators of Suhrawardī's works, has indicated, the number of worlds, according to Suhrawardī and the majority of his Ishrāqī followers, as well as many Sufis, is four: (i) the world of intellects, (ii) the world of corporeal bodies, (iii) the world of souls, and (iv) the world of imagination (*al-ʿālam al-mithāl* or *al-khayāl*) or *barzakh* (intermediary world). For further information see Suhrawardī, *L'Archange empourpré: quinze traités et récits mystiques*, trans. by Henry Corbin, p.78, n.39; Suhrawardī, *Hayākil al-Nūr*, p.64; *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq* (*The Philosophy of Illumination: a New Critical Edition of the Text of Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq* with English trans. by J. Walbridge and H. Ziai, p.243); Kuşpınar, *Ismāʿīl Ankaravī on the Illuminative Philosophy*, pp.157, n.27 and 177ff.

On the other hand, Ghazālī in his *Mishkāt al-Anwār* offers a twofold division of the worlds, one spiritual (*ruḥānī*) and the other corporeal (*jismānī*). These names, he says, are given to these two worlds in so far as they are considered in themselves; however, with respect to the organs and faculties that apprehend them, the spiritual world is called 'intellectual' (*ʿaqlī*), and the corporeal world is named 'sensory' (*ḥissī*). With respect to their reciprocal relationship, the spiritual world is designated as 'superior' (*ʿulwī*) and the corporeal world as 'inferior' (*suflī*). Ghazālī further elaborates that one may refer to them as the world of dominion (*al-mulk*) and sense-perception (*al-shahāda*), and the world of the unseen (*al-ghayb*) and sovereignty (*al-malakūt*), respectively. What is important for him is not the diversity and multiplicity of these expressions but rather the realities and ideas that lie beneath them. The corporeal world, which is perceived by all, serves as a point of departure for ascension to the spiritual world, which transcends the domain of sense-perception and imagination, and thus remains invisible to the majority of mankind (*Mishkāt*, pp.65–6; Buchman, *The Niche of Lights*, pp.25–6). In some of his other works, Ghazālī increases the number of worlds to three with the further addition of the world of *Jabarūt* (Power), which he places between the two above-mentioned worlds. His division is: (i) *Mulk* (Dominion), i.e. sensual world, (ii) *Jabarūt* (Power), i.e., intermediary world, and (iii) *Malakūt* (Sovereignty), i.e. spiritual world. For an extensive coverage of this subject, refer to A.J. Wensinck, 'On the Relation Between Ghazālī's

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1. *The world of intellect*[2]

Intellect, in their [the philosophers'] technical language, denotes any substance that cannot be pointed at by the senses at all. In every respect it is a pure essence detached from matter and time. They call this world the world of Divinity, the world of Power[3] and of Great Sovereignty,[4] the world of Lordship, the world of the Unseen, the world of Spirits, and the world of Command.

2. *The world of sense-perception*

The counterpart [of the world of intellect] is the world of sense-perception, which is also designated as the world of dominion,[5] that

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Cosmology and His Mysticism', pp.183–207; Kojiro Nakamura, 'Imām Ghazālī's Cosmology Reconsidered with Special Reference to the Concept of *Jabarūt*', *Studia Islamica*, 29–46.

2. *'Aql*: Intellect. The world of intellects represents for some of the Muslim philosophers, such as Ibn Sīnā, the world of the pure abstract spiritual Angels that are mostly described in the terminology of the Sharī'a as Cherubims or Archangels (Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā': al-Ilāhiyyāt*, II:435).

3. *Al-Jabarūt*: Power. As pointed out by Wensinck, this notion, together with that of *malakūt* (sovereignty), appears for the first time in some of the hadith of the Prophet, one of which runs as follows: "Awf b. Mālik said: One night I got up together with the Messenger of God (may His blessings and peace be upon him) for the prayer. When he bowed down [for the performance of *ruqū'*], he remained in that posture for the duration of the chapter of *al-Baqara*, as if articulating the formula: Glory to the Lord of Power (*Jabarūt*), Sovereignty (*Malakūt*), Majesty and Greatness' (*Sunan* al-Nasā'ī, Taṭbīq, 12; *Musnad* Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, 5/388, 6/24). See for its various versions, *Sunan* al-Dārimī, Ṣalāt, 147; *Sunan* al-Nasā'ī, Taṭbīq, 25, 86; *Musnad* Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, 2/353, 363, 5/397, 400. For its analysis within the context of Ghazālī's cosmology, see Wensinck, 'On the Relation Between Ghazālī's Cosmology and His Mysticism', pp.185ff.

4. *Al-Malakūt al-Kabīr*: Great Sovereignty. Cf. '*So glory be to Him, in Whose hand is the dominion (malakūt) of everything; and unto Him you shall be returned*' (Q. 36:83).

5. *Al-Mulk*: Dominion or kingdom. Cf. '*Blessed be He in Whose hand is dominion; and He has power over everything*' (Q. 67:1).

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of creation and that of corporeal bodies. And it is subdivided into (i) the ethereal and (ii) the elemental. What is meant by the ethereal is [the world of] the spheres[6] and by the elemental [the world of] the four elements[7] and the three orders of generated beings.[8]

3. *The world of rational souls*

The third is the world of rational souls, consisting of pure immaterial essences. This world, nevertheless, has control over [the realm of] the heavenly bodies and [that of] the human species. This world, therefore, is sometimes called the world of micro-sovereignty, the all-inclusive cosmos, and the world of humanity.

As for the rational soul, namely the governing spirit,[9] it is a subtle substance that subsists in [something] dense, exactly as the eye-sight, which is also a subtle substance and subsists in [something] dense, namely, in the pupil [of the eye]. [After the creation of the spirits] God [has] attached [them] to the souls by a connection of 'reciprocal longing'. Were it not for this reciprocal longing, the spirits that are originally of the world of lights would never incline to the souls that belong to the world of darkness. For this reason, it comes as no surprise that the ugly fall in love with the beautiful.[10] It would be

6. These are Atlas (Throne), Zodiac, Seat (Divine Pedestal), Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sun, Venus, Mercury, Moon.

7. See n. 12 in the preceding chapter.

8. See n. 13 in the preceding chapter.

9. *Al-rūḥ al-sulṭānī:* the Governing Spirit. Cf. Suhrawardī's notions of *al-sulṭān al-nūrī* and *al-sulṭān al-mudabbir*. Idem, *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq*, pp. 207, 254. For the elaboration of these concepts in Suhrawardī's philosophy, see Kuşpınar, *Ismā'īl Ankaravī on the Illuminative Philosophy*, pp. 89–90, 105, 127–30.

10. Although the author's original expression uses the term *rūmī* for 'beautiful' and *zanjī* for 'ugly', in the present context neither of them can be taken in their literal connotations, but rather, as we understand from the immediately preceding statement, they should both be interpreted figuratively, thus conforming with his distinction between the world of spirits, which is luminous and represents beautiful, and that of souls, which is dark and symbolizes ugly.

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really astonishing, however, were the beautiful to fall in love with the ugly.

It [i.e. the rational soul] is neither within nor outside of the bodies. Neither is it connected with nor disconnected from them. All of these [peculiarities] are but the accidents of the corporeal bodies; [and] anything that is not corporeal is therefore entirely free of them [i.e. accidents]. The rational soul, nevertheless, needs a *mount*,[11] which is referred to by the philosophers as 'the living-animal spirit' and which originates in a subtle mixture [of humours].[12] And this animal spirit is distinct from the 'Divine spirit' which I have already mentioned.

As long as the animal spirit persists in the body, the Divine spirit continues to exert its control therein through the mediation of the animal spirit. But the moment it ceases [to be vital], the control exercised by the governing spirit [over the body] immediately ceases.[13] For without the animal spirit all the limbs [of the body] would be dead; it is only through it that they are alive. Likewise, without the Divine spirit this spirit is deemed dead. This is why the animal spirit with respect to the limbs is a kind of mystery, and the Divine spirit with respect to the animal spirit is all the more of a mystery within a mystery.

11. *Maṭiyya*: Mount or vehicle. Anqarawī has borrowed this term, with its technical meaning and function in relation to the rational soul, from Suhrawardī's *Hayākil al-Nūr*, where the latter presented a comparative examination of the two souls. There he described the animal spirit as 'a subtle steamy body, generated from the subtlety of the mixture and issued forth from the left ventricle of the heart', and further elaborated it by saying: 'The animal soul is the mount on which the rational soul exercises its governing activities. So long as the animal soul is in a healthy condition, the rational soul exerts its control and power over the body. But once the animal soul disintegrates, the rational soul's control of the body ceases.' (Suhrawardī, *Hayākil al-Nūr*, pp. 53–4; for its translation see Kuşpınar, *Ismā'īl Ankaravī on the Illuminative Philosophy*, pp. 105, 308–9.)

12. This means that the animal spirit is generated by a mixture of the elements together with their four *subtle* natures of dryness, moisture, heat and cold, just as the body and limbs are built up by a mixture of the four *dense* humours of blood, phlegm, bile and spleen (Kuşpınar, *Ismā'īl Ankaravī on the Illuminative Philosophy*, p. 126).

13. These lines appear to correspond, almost word for word, to those of the *Hayākil al-Nūr*, p. 54.

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Meanwhile, whenever these people [i.e. the Sufis] talk about a mystery being as such-and-such, they are actually referring to 'the spirit itself'; but whenever they speak of a mystery within a mystery being as so-and-so, their intention is to signify 'the spirit's union with the Real'. If the spirit itself is a mystery in relation to all created beings, then the Real is *a fortiori* a mystery within mysteries in relation to the spirit. Nevertheless, the way the spirit exerts control over its microcosm, namely, over its own body, is comparable to the way in which the Real maintains control over the macrocosm [i.e. the world]. In the same vein, the position of the heart to that which controls it is the same as that of the throne to its Creator Who controls it. And again, the brain is related to the heart in the same way as the throne is related to its Creator, just as the [human] faculties are comparable to the angels[14] who by their very nature constantly obey, and hence are unable to disobey at all.[15] All the other nerves and organs can likewise be compared to the heavens and the earth.

Know that in His Book God mentions the spirit, and yet offers no explanation as to the real nature of it, when He states, '*Say, the spirit is of the command of my Lord*',[16] for the simple reason that human beings are not capable of comprehending it. This is because humankind consists of two types of people: the ordinary people and the elite. A person who is dominated by an ordinary temperament does not accept it. If he cannot even accept it as true with reference to God's attribute,[17] how can he do so with respect to the *human* spirit? As

14. Interestingly, Ibn Sīnā, while interpreting the Quranic verse, '*Only the angels we have made the guardians of the Fire*' (Q. 74:31), interprets 'angels' in much the same way, hence very likely prefiguring Anqarawī's current analogy, in the sense of imperceptible 'subtle faculties' (*al-quwā al-laṭīfa*); Ibn Sīnā, *Fī Ithbāt al-Nubuwwāt*, p.60; M. Marmura, trans., 'Avicenna: On the Proof of Prophecies and the Interpretation of the Prophet's Symbols', in *Medieval Political Philosophy*, ed. R. Lerner and M. Mahdi, p.120.

15. Cf. Q. 2:30–1, 34.

16. Q. 17:85.

17. Attribution of *rūḥ* to God occurs in several verses of the Quran; see for instance Q. 15:29; 19:17; 32:9.

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for the elite and the people of perfection, such as the prophets and saints, although they might know [the nature of the spirit], they do not reveal it, as has been alluded to in the following couplets of the eminent *Mathnawī:*

> Whosoever has been taught the mysteries of the (Divine) action;
> his lips are sealed and closed.[18]
> So that he should not tell the Sultan's secret to anyone nor pour
> out sugar before flies.[19]

The spirit, like the lamp, is of the Divine, sublime, spiritual and luminous world, whereas the soul, like the niche, is of the corporeal, mundane and murky world. The heart fluctuates between these two, which is why it is called *qalb* [i.e. that which fluctuates].[20] It has two faces: one looking towards the spirit and the other towards the soul. From the direction of the spirit, it receives light and transmits it towards the soul, thereby pouring it out onto the niche of the soul. Once the face of the heart that looks towards the soul has been polished and purified by the light of the remembrance of God, it [i.e. the heart] is brightened by that light, in such a way that the glass is illuminated by the lamp. Then the rays of light [emanating] from

18. *Mathnawī*, Book V:2240.

19. Ibid., Book III:20.

20. The idea of the heart's fluctuation from one state to another has been epitomized in various sayings of the Prophet, one of which, for instance, is the following: 'The believer's heart is between the two fingers of the All-Merciful'. The two fingers symbolize, for most Sufis, God's Attributes of Majesty (*jalāl*) and Beauty (*jamāl*), and such fluctuation of the heart is conceived by them in terms of the two involuntary mystical states of *qabḍ* and *basṭ*. *Qabḍ* signifies the contraction of the heart with grief, especially in the state of being veiled (*ḥijāb*), and *basṭ* denotes 'the expansion of the heart with joy', especially in the state of unveiling (*kashf*). Sufi authors generally invoke the following verse of the Quran as a scriptural ground for these two states: '*God contracts and expands, to Him you will return*' (Q. 2:245). For more on this subject, refer to *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, pp.488–9; English version, pp.374–5; *Kitāb al-Luma'*, pp.434–4. The heart's fluctuation has also occupied considerable space in Ibn al-'Arabī's writings; see, for instance, his *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, III:98–199; W. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, pp.106–7.

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the lamp of the spirit that fall on the glass of the heart are thrown back on the niche of the soul, which thus becomes illuminated just as the niche is illuminated by the glass. An indication of the soul's enlightenment is visible in its obedience, love, yearning and ecstasy, as well as its passionate inclination towards the side of Reality.

On the other hand, if the face of the heart that looks to the soul is hardened and opaque, it will set a veil before the lamp of the spirit and thereby render it incapable of bestowing light. This will result eventually in the occurrence of darkness of opposition and disobedience over the corporeal niche.

Regarding the status of 'the purified heart', [the verse:] '*Is the one whose heart God has opened to Islam, so that he has received enlightenment from his Lord (no better than the hardhearted one)?*'[21] As for 'the darkened heart', '*Woe to those whose hearts are hardened against the remembrance of God.*'[22] The purified hearts are like vessels containing the mysteries of God, as the Messenger of God – may His peace and blessing be upon him – has indicated: 'For God there are vessels on the earth, namely the hearts, among which the dearest to Him is the purest, firmest and the most gentle of all.'[23] That is to say, it is the purest [of all hearts] in the sense that it is purged of everything other than God, and of all the impurities [resulting from the behaviour] of the carnal soul, as well as all the darkness [that falls upon it because] of disobedience. It is the firmest in terms of love, ascetic discipline and spiritual striving [against the passions of one's carnal soul]. Again, it [i.e. this heart] is the most gentle towards all believers and the most compassionate towards all Muslims.[24]

21. Q. 39:22.

22. Ibid.

23. Cf. the following hadith: 'Among the people of earth there are vessels for God most High; the vessels of your Lord are the hearts of His servants who perform good works and deeds; and the dearest to Him among these hearts is the most tender and gentle of all.' Al-Hindī, *Kanz al-'Ummāl*, 1:241, hadith no. 1207.

24. The hadith quoted above by Anqarawī, and his explanation of it, can be compared with the following saying attributed to the Prophet: 'On the earth there are cups for God; they are in fact the hearts, the most beloved of which to Him is the most

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So, when the terrain of the heart is illuminated by the light of its Lord,[25] it becomes ready to receive the disclosures of [God's] Names and Attributes, and then His Essence.[26] Later on, the devotee [who has prepared his heart for such] first allows himself to be obliterated in the Real and thus arrives at the state of everlasting subsistence. What a heart-soothing explanation! What a compelling demonstration!

Now, it becomes imperative for us to explain in brief the Divine disclosures. O enthusiastic aspirant and ardent seeker of the mysteries [that lie behind the sayings] of God's Messenger, you must know that when he said, 'Every day and night God casts three hundred and sixty glances into the heart of every believing man and woman',[27] he meant by 'the glance of the Real' to signify '[His] disclosure and unveiling'. And witnessing[28] by each heart varies in accordance

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gentle, the purest and the firmest one; the most gentle to the brethren, the purest from all sins, and the firmest in the Essence of God.' Al-Hindī, *Kanz al-'Ummāl*, 1:243–4, hadith no. 1225.

25. Cf. Q. 39:69.

26. The Divine disclosure or theophany (*tajallī*) is defined by Ismā'īl Anqarawī in his *Minhāj* as 'the manifestation (*ẓuhūr*) of the lights of the unseen unto the hearts'. Such manifestation, he says, is of three kinds: (i) that of Divine Essence (*al-Dhāt al-Ilāhiyya*), (ii) that of His Attributes (*Ṣifātihā*), and (iii) that of His Actions (*Af'ālihā*). Among these three the most forceful and effective one is the first kind of *tajallī*, which not only obliterates the attributes of a Sufi who experiences it, but annihilates his essence as well. An example of this, as Anqarawī provides it, was the state of Moses who 'fell in a swoon, when His Lord manifested Himself on the mountain' (Q. 7:143). For more on this subject see *Minhāj*, pp. 257–8.

27. This can be compared with the following hadith: 'Indeed, God most High gazes at His servants three hundred and sixty times every day in an ever-renewing disclosure [i.e. in a continuous form of revelation and manifestation]. He does so because of His love of His creation.' Al-Hindī, *Kanz al-'Ummāl*, 4:255, hadith nos. 10413–15. We find in the *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, too, a similar expression attributed to 'Amr b. 'Uthmān al-Makkī, yet with somewhat extended variation, as follows: 'He [i.e. God] created the hearts seven thousand years before the spirits and kept them in the degree of union, and revealed the epiphany of His beauty to the heart three hundred and sixty times every day and bestowed on it three hundred and sixty looks of grace' (the translation is from Nicholson, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb of al-Hujwīrī*, p. 309; cf. its original, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, pp. 399–400).

28. *Mushāhada*: Witnessing; contemplation. One of the definitions provided by

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with its preparedness and receptivity. In the meantime, the [above-mentioned] quantity of glances is not necessarily for the purpose of delimiting and restricting it to three hundred and sixty in number. Perpetual veiling[29] causes 'aloofness';[30] perpetual witnessing, on the other hand, causes 'bewilderment',[31] by obliterating the attributes of the servant and thereby leading [him] inevitably to [the state of] 'incapacitation'.[32] On seeing that the veil causes 'aloofness', God casts a glance [into the heart of the servant] and burns away part of the veil [therein], as a result of which the servant at once turns towards [God] in a rapturous longing for [Him].[33] This sort of disclosure is

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Anqarawī for *mushāhada*, which in fact comes originally from al-Harawī's *Manāzil al-Sā'irīn* (pp.513ff.), is as follows: it is the utter falling away of the veil [from the sight of the Sufi traveller]. Through *mushāhada* the Sufi either sees things as a self-evident witness to the Oneness of the Real or witnesses the Real in the things themselves. This latter form is the real and actual witnessing, and not a representational one. For more, see Anqarawī, *Minhāj*, pp.256–7.

29. Whatever causes the heart to turn away from contemplation of God is a veil (*ḥijāb*); or rather, in terms of al-Hujwīrī's definition, it is 'any thought of other-than-God', which is in fact a kind of imperfection, and 'the more a man's thoughts are associated with other-than-God, the more is he veiled from God' (al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, Eng., p.282). Compare this with al-Jurjānī's both literal and technical definitions of *ḥijāb*: 'Veiling is any thing which conceals the object of your desire; and it is, according to the people of the Real, the imprint of the forms of the created objects in the heart, impeding the reception of the Real's theophany' (al-Jurjānī, *al-Ta'rīfāt*, p.96). Literally it runs, 'perpetual veil necessitates avoidance'.

30. *Al-Tajānub*: Seclusion, retirement; separation; avoidance. The whole phrase may be interpreted, in concurrence with the spirit of the hadith cited in the succeeding lines (n.34 below), as follows: If the veil remains permanently in the heart of the servant, it keeps him away from the contemplation of God's glances and hence demands him to ask of His forgiveness to remove the veil. But when the veil is lifted up from his heart and the servant is thereby granted a continual contemplation (*mushāhada*) of those glances, he falls suddenly into utter bewilderment (*ḥayra*) with ecstasy (*jadhba*), in which state all his human qualities become annihilated and all his limbs become inoperational.

31. *Ḥayra*: Amazement, bewilderment.

32. *Ta'ṭīl*: Incapacitation; annulment, cancellation; transcendence.

33. To put it more accurately, God, out of His generosity and mercy, gazes at the heart of His servant and burns away the veil therein and thus dissolves the remoteness between Him and the servant.

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of three types: that of Essence, that of Names, and that of Attributes; and each is associated with various degrees of pleasure, which can be apprehended by the gnostics who are familiar with the mysteries of the Divine disclosures.

When God sees that the ecstasy of witnessing has [already overpowered the servant and] brought [his] heart close to extinction by driving him to utter bewilderment, thereby incapacitating [his] organs and preventing them from fulfilling their duties, He at once withholds His gaze to allow the servant to return to his [former] veiled state so that he can regain [the consciousness of] his existence and thus continue to perform [his] duties and obligations. Whenever such witnessing arises in the servant, he loses consciousness of his own existence and from then on subsists through the Real; when, however, this does not happen [to him], he remains conscious of his own existence and keeps himself busy with [performing his] duties. The Messenger of God – may the peace and blessing of God be upon him – has alluded to these two stages when he said, 'I have a time with God, in which none of the cherubim nor any prophet sent [before me] is able to enter. I also have a time, that is, when I am with al-Ḥafṣa and al-Zaynab.'[34] Some of the gnostics, therefore, have asserted that the witnessing of the righteous oscillates between disclosure and concealment. A poem:

In beholding the One Whom I love with no intermediary,
I am drawn into a state [of rapture], leading [me] astray;
Setting [first] a blazing fire [in my heart], then extinguishing it
with its water.
Hence, you see me [now] both burnt and drowned.[35]

34. Cf. 'I am with God in a state (*waqt*) in which none of the cherubim nor any prophet is capable of being contained with me' (*Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, pp.365, 480; Eng., pp.283, 368). This saying, though not appearing in the eminent hadith collections, has nevertheless been cited very frequently in Sufi works, for whom it implies the importance of the station of absorption (*istighrāq*) in God (see *Aḥādīth-i Mathnawī*, p.39). Al-Ḥafṣa and al-Zaynab are two wives of the Prophet Muḥammad.

35. We have been unable to trace the author of this poem; however, it is cited by Anqarawī in another of his works. See Anqarawī, *Osmanlı Tasavvuf Düşüncesi*, p.221.

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Concerning this state, the Messenger of God – may His peace and blessing be upon him – said, 'Verily, my heart is prone to veiling (*layughān*), and I ask God for forgiveness a hundred times every day.'[36] *Ghayn*[37] refers to a thin cover.[38] In other words, when he [i.e. the Prophet] arrives at one of the stages of the Attributes and the Names, his heart is obscured by [the veils of] lights of these stages, a predicament which he regards as a kind of 'hindrance' and 'flaw' for which he therefore carries on asking forgiveness of God over a period of time until he attains to [the stage of] the self-disclosure of the Essence, as well as to the station of Unicity.[39] Thus, it is necessary for the Sufi who is travelling on the way to God to avoid fixing his gaze upon the [emanations of] lights of these stages, since

36. In another version of this hadith, the numerical value of 'forgiveness' is recorded as seventy. For the hadith and its variations, see *Musnad* Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, 4: 211, 260; *Kashf al-Khafā'*, 1:252; *K. al-Luma'*, p.374; *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, pp.403, 506; Eng., pp.312, 391.

37. According to the Sufis, *ghayn*, being the root of the word *layughān* as given in the hadith, stands for a kind of veil that falls over the heart of the servant, and may be either thin (*khafīf* and *raqīq*) or dense (*ghalīẓ*). The dense veil is for those who commit great sins and habitually forget God, and it is only able to be removed by constant and proper repentance; whereas the thin veil is for all, including saints and prophets, though some people, regarding the hadith in question as weak, base themselves on the verse, '*The [Prophet's] heart in no way falsifies of what he saw*' (Q. 53:11) and proclaim that the Prophet's heart cannot be subject to 'such creaturely invasion' (*K. al-Luma'*, pp.373–7). But for those who do not make an exception of the Prophet, they declare that the thin veil is usually caused by the consciousness of one's own existence and therefore can be eliminated by losing one's own consciousness within the overwhelming contemplation of God. (For further detail, see *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, pp.506–7; Eng., p.391.) This veil of *ghayn* is in contrast to that of *rayn*, which is the veil that covers the hearts of unbelievers due to their infidelity and can only be removed by faith.

38. In place of *al-ghiṭā'* (veil or cover) one of the manuscripts (L) has *al-'aṭā'* (gift), which is consistent with conventional Sufi teachings, who generally regard Divine gifts, favours and graces as 'veils' that come between themselves and God, although in the eyes of ordinary people they are generous blessings bestowed by God on them. Cf. 'That which is the very essence of grace (*lutf*) to the vulgar becomes wrath to the noble favourites (of God)' (*Mathnawī*, Book IV:2982).

39. Cf. 'Here the understanding becomes silent or (else) it leads into error, because the heart is with Him (God), or indeed the heart is He' (*Mathnawī*, Book I:3489).

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they all may give rise to a luminous veil that would hold him back from arriving at [the station of] the Essence, as al-Ḥakīm al-Sanā'ī has noted in this couplet:

> Whatsoever it might be, belief or disbelief, [it matters not if] you would lag behind on the road [with it].
> [Nor does it yet matter] whether it be obedience or insolence, [if] you would fall far from the Friend [because of it.][40]

Moreover, the beloved of the all-Merciful – may the blessing of the all-Glorious be upon him – has hinted at both luminous and dark veils, when he said, 'God has seventy veils of light and darkness; were He to uncover them, then would the splendours of His Face surely burn away whatsoever He gazes upon.'[41] And in other versions [the number of veils] is recorded as 'seven hundred', and in some others, as 'seventy thousand'.

Know, O Sufi traveller, that God is free from being veiled by light and darkness,[42] and that due to His intense manifestness, He may seem hidden. Furthermore, the veil is real only with respect to the servants. This being the case, the veil of darkness is caused by such things as one's preoccupation with one's physical needs and necessities, such as food, drink and clothes, and indulging one's desires, love for children, gardens and dwellings, as well as for so many other things that are impossible to enumerate here.

As for the veil of light, it is caused by such things as succumbing to spiritual delights, like the sweetness of knowledge, gnosis and acts of obedience. For this reason, Al-Nūrī[43] once declared, 'Let not the

40. Al-Ghaznavī, *Dīwān*, 51 (Z-19).

41. Cf. Buchman, *The Niche of Lights*, p.39; Gairdner, pp.76–7; *Aḥādīth-i Mathnawī*, p.50. For another version of the hadith, see *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim, Īmān p.293; *Sunan* of Ibn Māja, *Muqaddima* 13. Also cf. *Mathnawī*, Book II:820–2; *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, II:632, III:298; Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, pp.217, 328, and 401, n.19.

42. Ibn al-'Arabī identifies 'the veils of darkness' (*al-ḥujūb al-ẓulmānīyya*) as 'natural bodies' (*al-ajsām al-ṭabī'iyya*) – rendered by Austin as 'natural forms' – and 'those of light' (*al-ḥujūb al-nūriyya*) as 'subtle spirits' (*al-arwāḥ al-laṭīfa*). *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, p.54; *Bezels of Wisdom*, p.56.

43. Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī of Baghdad (d.295/907).

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serene tranquillity of [your] servitude beguile you, for it involves forgetfulness of Lordship.' Al-Wāsiṭī[44] likewise warned, 'Beware of the delights that you obtain from pious deeds, because they are [like] deadly poisons.'[45] By the same token, ardent desire for sainthood and saintly miracles and Paradise, as well as all that is contained therein, and the like, all are the veils of light, as the following hadith of God's Messenger – may His peace and blessing be upon him – indicates: 'This world is made unlawful for the people of the Hereafter, so is the Hereafter for the people of this world. Both, however, are made unlawful for the people of God.'[46]

The same notion may be consolidated further with the help of an anecdote which is related of al-Shiblī,[47] who was once asked by someone, 'Tell me, what is union?' He replied, 'First abandon the two pressing cravings, then you will definitely reach union.' Thereupon, the enquirer questioned again, 'What are the two pressing cravings, Abū Bakr?' He answered, 'Two peaks stand before you, setting a veil between you and God.' Once again, the enquirer asked, 'What are these two peaks?' He responded, 'This world and the hereafter; our Lord, therefore, has stated, "*Among you there are some who desire this world and some who desire the Hereafter*",[48] but where are those

44. Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Wāsiṭī (d.331/942).

45. Al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya*, p.195; cf. Eng. trans. by von Schlegell, *Principles of Sufism*, p.166.

46. *Kashf al-Khafā'*, 1:493; *Aḥādīth-i Mathnawī*, pp.204–5. Cf. Abū al-Qāsim al-Naṣr Ābādhī's definition of *futuwwa* (chivalry): '*Murū'a* (valour) is part of *futuwwa*, which consists in turning one's back on the two worlds [this world and the world to come], being disdainful of both' (*al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya*, p.227). Also compare it with Rūmī's couplets: 'The fountain of Mercy has become unlawful to them: they are drinking cup after cup of deadly poison' (*Mathnawī*, Book VI:2272).

47. Abū Bakr Dulaf b. Jaḥdar al-Shiblī (d.334/945), one of the famous disciples of al-Junayd (d.298/910).

48. Q. 3:152. When this verse was recited in the presence of al-Shiblī, Anqarawī narrates, he cried out to his disciples, 'Is there not a single one among you who seeks God?' Again, on the basis of this verse Anqarawī classifies *murīds* (seekers) into three groups: (i) the seekers of this world, (ii) the seekers of the other world, and (iii) the seekers of the Protector (*Mawlā*). For further detail see *Minhāj*, pp.199–200.

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who desire God?' In saying so, he [i.e. al-Shiblī] concluded his discourse.[49]

However, the matter which I have just pointed out, and the explanation of the meaning of the hadith dealing with both luminous and dark veils, concerns the states of Sufi travellers journeying on the way to God. But as for the gnostics, they attain to the station of the unicity of union[50] without being obstructed from [beholding] God by any physical concerns or spiritual delights, for they, having been thoroughly cognizant of the realities of things, witness God in all their states, without ever being oblivious of Him at all. This is because [for them] all beings are loci for the manifestations of the Names, which in turn are identical – at the station of unity – with the Named.[51] Whoever has not attained to this profound stage ought to keep silent and avoid denying it. God the Almighty, therefore, states: '*Do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge.*'[52] All that we have thus far said would be useful '*for a person who has a heart [to understand] or who listens with attention, and who will be a witness [to it].*'[53]

49. These two 'peaks' seem to have been characterized in another anecdote, which was transmitted again in the name of al-Shiblī, as 'the two steps or stages that stand between the servant (*'abd*) and the Lord (*Rabb*)', and to which, as Nicholson pointed out, Rūmī made allusion in the *Mathnawī*, Book IV:1549: 'This journey to union was (only) a matter of two steps (*khuṭwatayn*) [i.e., as Nicholson interprets, passing away from this world and the next]: because of your noose I have remained sixty years on the way.' (See Nicholson, *Mathnawī* (*Commentary*), Book VIII:65.) Interestingly, al-Ghazālī, while discussing the command of God to Moses as dictated in the verse, '*Put off your shoes* (*fa'khla' na'layk*)' (Q. 20:12), remarks that the inward significance of 'the putting-off of the shoes' is an admonition to 'the putting aside of the two worlds' (*tark al-kawnayn*); *Mishkāt*, p.74; Buchman, *The Niche of Lights*, p.34.

50. *Aḥadiyyat al-jam'* is the essential and unitive state in which the *'ārif*, being conscious of nothing but God, continuously beholds Him.

51. This refers to the mystic doctrine that God is manifested in His Names and to the Māturidī doctrine of the identity of the name and the named. See, for example, Bazdawī, *Kitāb Uṣūl al-Dīn*, the chapter on '*al-ism wa'l-musammā*'.

52. Q. 17:36

53. Q. 50:37.

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Now we come to the conclusion of our discourse and the clarification of our ultimate intention. Since you have by now become well acquainted with the explanations of the spirit, the heart and the soul – it is timely also to learn the exegesis of the lamp, the glass and the niche. What I understand by the lamp is the Divine spirit; by the glass, the pure heart or the animal spirit; and by the niche, the dark soul and the material body. If this is so, then the [Divine] discourse can be interpreted accordingly, in the following manner:

God illumines all spirits and bodies, and governs, controls and guides them, just as the spirits illumine, govern and shed light on the glass of the human heart or that of the animal spirit. This has become like a brilliant star due to its having been purged, through the illumination of the governing spirit, of all the impurities belonging to the soul, as well as of all Satanic delusions.

Alternatively, what might be meant by the lamp is the immutable entities, and by the glass the worldly spirits and the celestial souls, and by the niche the forms of all contingent and created beings. Thus, the [Divine] discourse may be reinterpreted as follows:

God illumines all the heavenly spirits and also governs all the earthly forms and bodies in a manner analogous to that of the lamp of immutable entities,[54] which illumines, governs and guides in the glass of the various souls, and also illumines and governs in the niche of contingent and created beings. Thus, these glasses attain [a luminescence] as intense as that of a bright star by virtue of the lights of their entities and the beams of their governing names. These [emanations of] lights, subsisting in the external world, are differentiated into varieties and colours because of the [various] aptitudes and receptivities of the spirits. For, in origin, there was no colouration, differentiation or variation. The differentiation comes [later] from the [variation] in the aptitudes of their essences.

54. *Al-aʿyān al-thābita* (sing. *al-ʿayn al-thābita*): persistent entities; immutable entities; permanent archetypes; latent essences. For this important Akbarian notion, see Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, pp. 159–96; W. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, pp. 11–12, 83–6.

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This is similar to the example of the light of the Sun, the rays of which, when shining upon diverse glasses, become differentiated into various [forms] according to the various colours of those glasses. For in reality there was no colour, [as has been articulated in] the following couplets of the *Mathnawī*:[55]

We were all simple and one substance.
We were all without head and without foot.
Like the Sun, we were one substance.
Like water, we were knotless and pure.
When that pure Light took on form,
It became multitudinous in number like the shadows of a wall.

55. *Mathnawī*, Book I:686–8.

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Chapter Three
On the blessed olive tree

Know, O seeker of the mysteries of Reality! What is intended by the blessed olive tree is 'knowledge', and by the oil thereof, 'knowledge of God', which is obtained through the perfection of knowledge, just as the oil is acquired from the olive tree. Such an intended meaning appears to be confirmed in a story, which is told in his *Mathnawī* by the Sultan of the Gnostics and the Proof of the Arrivers [at Divine union] concerning an ancient King. He relates:

Mention was once made, in the presence of the King, that there was a tree [somewhere] in the world and that whosoever ate of its fruit would never die or pass away at all. The King's love [for the tree] soon grew and he dispatched envoys and delegates supplied with abundant goods to all corners of the country, and even to all the highlands in the region in order that they could search for this tree and try to gather information about it. So, the envoys carried out an [extensive] search for it, [roaming from one region to another], sometimes asking for information about it and sometimes seeking for clues leading to it. However, they were able to find neither any trace of it, nor even obtain any knowledge about it. On the contrary, whenever they asked people about it, all they received was mockery. So much so that in time they became [exhausted and] incapable of looking any further for it; and hence, desperate and helpless as they were, they decided to pursue their search no further.

But, one day some people from the villages of those highlands [through which the envoys had travelled] mentioned [to them] the [praiseworthy] qualities of a certain unity-affirming shaykh, who had himself attained excellence [in character] as well as refining [the character of others]; thus he had not only reached prominence in erudition but he had also put [his knowledge] into practice. He was

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also deemed to be one of the Substitutes and the Poles.[1] [As soon as they learnt of the shaykh's whereabouts] the envoys hurried towards his lodgings and, bowing humbly and respectfully before him, they then asked for his assistance by profusely lamenting: 'O Shaykh! Take pity and have mercy on us, for the situation we are currently in is indeed strange; we are foreigners in this town and we are searching for the object of [our] desire. Alas! From among all these people we have not been able to find anyone who could possibly guide [us] to it.' Thus, they related to the shaykh what exactly the matter was and then, like many an anxious dervish, they remained standing in his presence. As soon as the shaykh learned of [the object of] their enquiry, he smiled and said [to them]: 'O heedless ones! Clearly you are oblivious to the secret of the gnostics' words. You have misunderstood the discourse of the people of perfection. For what is intended by the tree is "knowledge", and by its fruit is "gnosis". So whoever eats of this fruit, never dies, nor even passes away at all', in much the same way as the Sultan of the Saints has articulated it, in his *Mathnawī*, through the tongue of this shaykh, as follows:

> The Shaykh laughed and said to him, 'O simpleton, this is the tree of knowledge in the sage,
> You have gone after the form, you have gone astray: you cannot find (it) because you have abandoned the reality.
> (It is) that one (thing) from which a hundred thousand effects arise: its least effects are everlasting life.'[2]

1. *Quṭb*, 'Pole' or Axis (pl. *aqṭāb*), is a technical term referring to the Saint (*walī*) who holds the most prominent and the highest rank in the structural hierarchy of *awliyā'*, in place of which the term *ghawth* is sometimes used. At every epoch there is a *quṭb* or *ghawth* on whom the preservation of the world depends and who, after his death, is succeeded by one of the four saints known as *awtād* (Pillars) who are next to him in rank yet above the forty or sixty *abdāl* or *hudalā'* (sing. *badal*, 'Substitute'). Concerning these and similar mystic positions see *Kashf al-Maḥjūb* (Eng. version), p.214; Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, pp.194–5; Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, pp.163–5; Bernd Radtke and John O'Kane, *The Concept of Sainthood in Early Islamic Mysticism*, pp.109–10.

2. *Mathnawī*, Book II:3668, 3670 and 3672. For the entire story, see the *Mathnawī*

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This idea appears to be reinforced in the word of the Creator of jinns and mankind, when He declares in His Book, wherein lies neither ambiguity nor doubt at all: '*Is he who was dead, and We gave him life, and provided for him a light to walk by among the people?*'[3] Of the person who had previously been ignorant and whom God has later taught and thus delivered from the doom of error by granting him the good fortune of guidance and ennobling him with the light of gnosis, God likens him to a person who had once been dead and whom He has later brought back to life by giving him a light with which he could not only walk among the people but also discern the realities of things. In other words, [God likens] the one who remains in a state of ignorance to the one who is stumbling in darkness,[4] and who can neither set himself free from such a state nor attain success. Thus, in reality, the one who is dead is he who is ignorant of the prophetic and saintly sciences, whereas the living one is he who is well aware of and acquainted with God. That is why the Prophet – may [God's] peace and blessing be upon him – has commanded: '*Seek knowledge, even if it is [found] in China. For the pursuit of knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim man and woman.*'[5]

The pursuit of knowledge consists of two parts: (i) the obligatory, and (ii) the meritorious.[6] The obligatory part comprises all kinds of knowledge that are required of man concerning the *Sharīʿa*, e.g. knowledge of all the essential religious duties and obligations,

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Book II:3641–72. Our translation is based on Anqarawī's Arabic rendition of the original Persian text.

3. Q. 6:122.

4. Cf. Q. 2:275; 24:40.

5. *Kashf al-Khafā'*, 1:154; *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, p. 11; Eng., p. 11. Even though the first part of this hadith has been questioned, the second part is authentic, as recorded in the canonical collections of *aḥādīth*. See for instance *Sunan* of Ibn Māja, *Muqaddima* 17.

6. Elsewhere the author states that, though knowledge has numerous types and branches, nevertheless it can generally be classified into four groups. (1) Religious (*sharʿī*), containing all branches of basic Islamic disciplines such as *fiqh*, *tafsīr*, hadith, etc. (2) Rational (*ʿaqlī*), comprising two sub-divisions: (2.1) discursive or cognitive knowledge derived from reasoning (*istidlālī*) and reflection (*naẓar*), such as philosophy

knowledge about the Prophetic precepts and practices, and knowledge of what is permitted and what is forbidden, and such like. The meritorious part, on the other hand, consists of all knowledge that is above and beyond what is necessary, including knowledge of the Sufi Path (*al-ṭarīqa*) and Reality (*al-ḥaqīqa*), which is in keeping with the Book and the *Sunna*. But any knowledge which is not consistent with these two and which is not derived from them is mundane and non-meritorious. Meanwhile, the Prophet – may God's peace and blessing be upon him – was pointing to these three, when he said that '*The Sharī'a consists of all that I say, and the Ṭarīqa all that I do, and the Ḥaqīqa all that I experience.*'[7]

The knowledge of the *ṭarīqa* and *ḥaqīqa* can only be obtained [by abiding] in the companionship of the gnostics, as well as in the assemblies of the eminent testifiers of God's unity. In other words, it is only from their writings that their knowledge can be acquired. As far as their mysteries and intuitive tastes [i.e. personal experiences] are concerned, they are entrusted exclusively to the one who possesses them in person, unless they are decreed from the immaterial world through the spiritual intervention of an eminent shaykh, for the purpose of cultivating the one who is thereby being prepared for the intuitive tastes of the Reality and for the witnessing of [the actual state of] Unity.[8] But this is rare, and anything that is rare is as if it is non-existent. In such a case, then, you must never expose yourself to their books and treatises without [the guidance

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(*kalām*), astronomy, geometry and mathematics, etc.; and (2.2) naturally necessary (*ḍarūrī*) knowledge, e.g. one's knowledge of one's state of hunger and satiety. (3) Sentimental (*wijdānī*) knowledge, also called knowledge of states (*aḥwāl*) that deals with the various psychological and spiritual conditions, like ecstasy, love, longing, etc. (4) Intimate Divine Knowledge (*'ilm-i ladunī*), also known as the knowledge of mysteries (*'ilm-i asrār*), which is given as a special favour and gift by Allah to His saintly servants (*awliyā'*) by way of inspiration (*ilhām*). See for detail Anqarawī, *Minhāj*, pp.211–12; and Kuşpınar, *Ismā'īl Ankaravī on the Illuminative Philosophy*, p.63.

7. At the very end of the *Kashf al-Khafā'* (2:6), the following is added: 'and gnosis is the capital of my property'. Cf. 'The Law is knowledge, the Path action, the Truth attainment unto God.' *Mathnawī*, Book V: Preface.

8. This phenomenon of achieving proper spiritual training from the departed

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of] a living shaykh,[9] who is the inheritor of the Prophetic knowledge of his time. What was inherited [by him] from the Prophet covers all kinds of Divine knowledge, involving Lordly mysteries, mystical stations and disclosures, as the Prophet himself – may God's peace and blessing be upon him – declared: 'Prophets bequeath neither gold nor silver, but they do leave knowledge [behind themselves], and whosoever takes thereof should take it in superabundant portion.'[10] That is to say, whosoever obtains Divine knowledge from the inner niche, which is the locus for the disclosure of God's

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soul of a perfect shaykh is known, in Sufi literature, as *uwaysiyya*. Among the eminent Sufis who are reported to have attained this type of spiritual realization are such names as Bāyazīd al-Bisṭāmī, Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshiband (791/1388) and Aḥmad Sirhindī (d.1624). For further information on *uwaysiyya* and some other examples for this type of training, see: Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Sanūsī (d.1276/1859), 'al-Salsabīl al-Ma'īn fī al-Ṭarā'iq al-Arba'īn', in *al-Majmū'āt al-Mukhtār min Mu'allafāt al-Ustādh al-A'ẓam al-Imām Sayyidī Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Sanūsī*, pp.31–3; Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh, *Laṭā'if*, especially chapter on "Ahd al-ṭarīqa'; 'Abd al-Majīd b. Muḥammad al-Khānī al-Khālidī al-Naqshibandī, *al-Ḥadā'iq al-Wardiyya fi Ḥaqā'iq Ajlā' al-Naqshibandiyya* (Istanbul: Cihan Nesriyat ve Matbaacılık, n.d.), pp.9–10. Meanwhile, the present author Anqarawī also mentions elsewhere that Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshiband accomplished his training through the spirituality of 'Abd al-Khāliq al-Ghujdawānī (d.575/1179) (*idem*, *Sharḥ-i Mathnawī*, 1:140). Connected with this, there is still another form of spiritual realization called *tawajjuh* (spiritual attentiveness) through which the *murīd* enters into communion, by way of deep concentration, with the spirits of dead Sufi masters. This was one of the mystical doctrines taught by 'Alā' al-Dawla al-Simnānī (d.736/1336); see Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, p.58. It is also worth mentioning at this point that the appearance and presence of Ibn al-'Arabī's *rūḥāniyya* in the visions of his faithful disciples, like Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d.1273), became an instructive guide and aid for their spiritual enlightenment; see M. Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, pp.140, 146, n.58.

9. In his *magnum opus* the *Minhāj al-Fuqarā'* Anqarawī discusses this issue, i.e., the necessity of a living spiritual guide (*murshid-i ḥayy*) for cultivating the novice (*murīd*) by preparing him to understand the profound secrets and mysteries of the mystical Path. Basing himself on a hadith, he emphasizes therein that even the Prophet had his own shaykh and teacher (*mu'allim*), namely, Gabriel (*Jibrā'īl*) who instructed him in all Divine matters (*Minhāj*, pp.31–2).

10. For the full version of this hadith see: *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī, *Waṣāyā* 32; *Sunan* of al-Tirmidhī, *'Ilm* 19; *Sunan* of Abū Dāwūd, *'Ilm* 1; *Sunan* of Ibn Māja, *Muqaddima* 17; *Musnad* of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal 5:196.

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His acts become manifest in you – especially the acts involving His goodness and generosity, His knowledge, His unity and the belief in that unity – then the vision [and awareness of all God's acts] [prevails and] annihilates the vision of your own acts, as well as of your goodness and obedience. 'The disappearance of all that is witnessed' refers to when the vision of the creation [falls away and] vanishes from you, and you no longer see the creation as the source of either harm[s] or benefit[s], blessings or obstacles. It also refers to 'the loss of all senses', the meaning of which may be better understood when he says: 'Through Me he speaks and through Me he sees'.[17] It is even understood as 'the vanishing of [a zealousness for] sincerity', by which we mean that you would no longer see yourself and your actions as sincere, since, just as with yourself, all your actions and attributes are defective.[18] This is why Abū Yazīd once said that 'Even if the Throne and all its contents were to be multiplied more than

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Witness becomes manifest, the witnessed disappears, the senses depart and [zealousness for] the sincerity vanishes.' Compare my translation with that of Arberry, *The Doctrine of the Sufis*, p. 151, and that of von Schlegell, *Principles of Sufism*, p. 320.

17. Allusion is made here to a widely circulated *ḥadīth qudsī* in Sufi circles. For greater detail refer to William A. Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word*, hadith no. 49.

18. Anqarawī's comments on Ibn Yazdānyār's expression seem to follow almost word for word those of al-Kalābādhī who, in his *al-Taʿarruf*, already explained it very eloquently at the beginning of the chapter on 'Their [i.e. Sufis'] Sayings on the Characteristics of the Gnostic'. So as to enable a comparison between the two, I quote Arberry's English translation (*Doctrine of the Sufis*, pp. 151–2) of al-Kalābādhī's relevant exposé: 'When he says "the Attestation appears", he means the attestation of God, that is, what He did with the mystic aforetime, His kindness and bounteous gift of gnosis, unification, and faith in Him: the consideration of this causes the mystic's own cast, his own piety and obedience, to pass away from his thoughts. He then sees the much that is of himself swallowed up in the little that is of God, even though what is of God is much, and what is of himself is little. The passing away of attestations is the giving up of considering other men, as to whether they harm or profit, blame or praise: while the departing of the senses is exemplified by the Tradition, "Through Me he speaks and through Me he sees". The abolishing of sincerity means that, when the mystic considers his own quality – for his attributes are subject to causation like himself – he no longer considers himself as sincere, and he no longer thinks his actions have ever been or will ever be sincere.'

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one hundred thousand times [and placed] in one of the corners of the gnostic's heart, still he would not feel it.'[19] Meanwhile, Shaykh al-Islām Abū [Ismāʿīl] al-Anṣārī al-Harawī declared that 'Gnosis is the unification of the gnostic with the object of [his] gnosis, as being one and the same thing.'[20] I have thus far set forth these widely accepted sayings [of the saints] in the hope of receiving blessings and spiritual benefits [from them].

The results [we have arrived at] can be summed up in concise terms as follows: since you have by now learnt the meaning and nature of the blessed tree and its oil, you must now lend your ear to the most valuable part of the discourse, namely the outcome of what we have aimed for and the gist of what we have thus far spoken of; that is: (i) God illumines the heavens of the spirits by guiding them all to what He has prepared [for them] in His pre-eternal knowledge; (ii) by exercising His power, He governs the world of forms and bodies; and (iii) He manifests His perfections as well as the lights of His Names therein [i.e. in the world]. In the same manner, the spirit as a lamp enlightens, governs and exercises control over the niche of the human body. And the governing spirit as such does the same over the glass of the animal spirit, which in turn becomes as luminous as a glistening star, by having been purged of all immaterial impurities and corporeal darknesses.

As for the verb *tūqadu* ('lit [from a blessed tree]'), if it is read with the letter *tā'*, the implicit pronoun there refers to the glass, by which is meant the animal spirit; if, on the other hand, it is read with the letter *yā'* [i.e. *yūqadu*], then the pronoun in question refers to the lamp, by which is intended the governing spirit. In this case, the animal spirit or the governing spirit is set alight by the tree of the

19. Cf. the celebrated *ḥadīth qudsī*: 'Neither My earth nor My heaven contains me, but I am contained by the heart of My truly believing, God-conscious, pure and pious servant.' Concerning the above-mentioned saying by Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī, see Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, pp. 88, 120 (Eng. *Bezels of Wisdom*, pp. 101, 148); Nicholson, Rūmī, Commentary on *Mathnawī*, Book VII:167.

20. For al-Harawī's (d.481/1089) elaborate account of *maʿrifa*, see ʿAfīf al-Dīn Sulaymān b. ʿAlī al-Tilimsānī, *Sharḥ ʿAfīf al-Dīn Sulaymān al-Tilimsānī*, pp. 559–67.

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Divine knowledge, a tree whose very essence abounds in benefits and goodness. Moreover, it is the very source of all blessings pertaining to this world and the hereafter. At the very least, its benefit is [probably] this: 'Whoever tastes of its fruits neither dies nor vanishes at all.'

Incidentally, when an animal yields a lot of milk and many offspring, it is referred to as 'blessed' by the Arabs. By the same token, if a tree bears ample fruits, it is also called 'blessed'. Therefore, on account of its limitless and endless benefits, that tree [i.e. the tree of Divine knowledge] is worthier than anything else to be called 'blessed'.[21]

A rather more subtle interpretation may be offered when looked at from a different angle: the Divine presence is both the light of the heavens of all immaterial spirits and the light of all corporeal bodies. The way the light of the Divine presence manifests itself at various levels [in the heavens and the earth] is analogous to the way that the lamp of the spirit burns within the niche of the human body. The lamp of the spirit is placed [glowing] within the glass of the animal spirit or in that of the human heart. The glass of the heart then transforms into [as if it were] a luminescent star [but] only after it has become completely detached from all worldly distractions and cut off from all material [this-worldly] and spiritual [other-worldly] attachments [and concerns]. In this way, it is this heart that is kindled and enlightened by the tree of the hidden Divine knowledge.[22]

Moreover, since the hidden Divine knowledge is beyond space [i.e. spatial limitations] and has no connection whatsoever with corporeal bodies, and is entirely free from matter and temporality, it

21. A distant allusion is perhaps made to the blessings received, in terms of abundant yields of cattle and plants, by the Banū Sa'd tribe due to the arrival of the infant Prophet Muḥammad in the home of his nursing-mother Ḥalīma, and the presence of his light in their midst. For an account of this, see any standard work on the life and the early childhood of the Prophet, e.g., A. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ibn Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah*, pp. 70–2.

22. For information on the source of the intimate Divine knowledge (*al-'ilm al-ladunī*), refer to such Quranic verses as 18:65 and 20:99. For a more detailed account of this knowledge see al-Ghazālī, 'al-Risālat al-Laduniyya', trans. Margaret Smith, in *JRAS* (1938), Part 2: 177–200, and Part 3: 353–74.

is therefore aptly described here as '*[being] neither of the East nor of the West*'. This signifies that this hidden knowledge springs forth neither from the Orient of the immaterial spirits nor from the Occident of the corporeal bodies; rather, it is from an [intermediate] isthmus (*barzakh*)[23] connecting the two, and originating directly from the side of God.

'*Its oil is well-nigh luminous*': the oil of this blessed tree almost glows; i.e. it flashes and illuminates; '*even though fire has scarcely contacted it.*' The interpretation of this is: the very substance of this tree of knowledge, whose mysteries are pure and free from the blemishes of the carnal soul and from the impurities of Nature, almost glistens and scintillates by itself on account of its utmost purity and intense brightness, without even [being touched by] the fire of the [Divine] disclosure. Once again, the fire here is to be understood as 'the fire of [Divine] disclosure', which appeared to Moses – may peace be upon him – from the side of the Mount [*Ṭūr*].[24] In the same way, from the direction of the Mount of His Essence, God discloses Himself to the hearts of the gnostics through [His fiery-theophany] so as to consume both the material and the spiritual veils.

'*Light upon light!*': the light of theophany, when combined with the light of the objects of gnosis and of the pure mysteries, turns into 'light upon light'. Or [an alternative meaning] for 'light upon light' may be intended: when the niche of the human body becomes illumined with the light of the glass of the heart, and the glass of the heart with that of the lamp of the Divine spirit, and the lamp of the Divine spirit with that of the oils of the Divine mysteries, which all [originally] spring forth from the tree of the hidden Divine knowledge, then [i.e. within the niche of the human body] there emerges 'light upon light' and 'joy upon joy'. Hence, should you see someone who has purified the glass of his breast with that light, and purged his innermost heart from the grief of deceit, you should

23. Concerning this term, see Kuşpınar, *Ismāʿīl Ankaravī on the Illuminative Philosophy*, pp. 166–7, n. 48.

24. For Moses' perception of fire, see the Quran, 20: 10; 27: 7; 28: 29.

submit yourself as a humble servant to his care and take him as a guide leading towards the Real [i.e. God]. It is hoped that he may imbue you with the eye of 'intense spiritual force'[25] and thus liberate you from anxiety and distress. These indications should be sufficient for you to learn the meaning [and significance] of the blessed tree.

25. This refers to a kind of spiritual and transformative power, known in Sufi terminology as *himma*. The shaykh possessed of this power cultivates, with God's grace and permission, the hearts of his novices. In his *Minhāj* Anqarawī devotes considerable space to expounding this notion, where he describes it as one of the progressive remedial stages required of the mystic traveller during his spiritual journey and, sticking to the classical sources of *taṣawwuf*, like al-Harawī's *Manāzil al-Sā'irīn*, he defines it as 'Turning the heart, with the full concentration of all its faculties (*quwāhu*), exclusively to the Real for the attainment of perfection' (*Minhāj*, p. 224). On this notion, see also Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*; other notions connected with it are *tawajjuh*, *tarbiya bi al-jadhba*.

Chapter Four

On guidance from the beginning to the end

It is related on the authority of ʿAbdullāh b. ʿUmar – may God be pleased with both of them[1] – that he heard the Messenger of God – may God's peace and blessing be upon him – saying: '*Verily, God created the creation in darkness and then sprinkled of His light upon it. Whoever attains that light finds guidance, and whoever misses it goes astray from the right path.*'[2] This means that God first created all beings in the darkness of nothingness, and then, out of His Essence, Attributes and Acts, bestowed upon them, in accordance with what was required by the aptitude of their respective individual beings, a sort of existence that consists of such rational entities as 'life', 'knowledge', 'will', 'power', 'hearing', 'sight' and 'speech'. All that pertains to the existent beings is no other than God; moreover, according to the witnessing of the people of Reality, there is no being save God, for '*Everything perishes except His Countenance*'.[3]

When God wills to guide one of His servants to the light of His unity, He expands his breast through the light resulting from the manifestation of [His] Names, and then causes him to annihilate his imaginary essence in His own essence.[4] Consequently, the servant in question perceives '*that sprinkled light*' encompassing all existent beings. But even so, no one can attain to this light except through

1. i.e. ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, the second caliph of Islam, and his son ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUmar.

2. Refer to Chapter 1, n. 1.

3. Q. 28:88.

4. Cf. Q. 6:125; 39:22.

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God's will and guidance,[5] as He indicates in His words: '*God does guide whomever He wills to His light*'.[6] This is why, when He says '*Guide us to the straight path*',[7] God does indeed command that His servants beseech His guidance and direction in attaining to this light that has been scattered upon [all] individual beings. This is the path of unity upon which all the prophets and saints persevere. In other words, [His servants should plead as follows:]

> Keep us, [O God], firm on [Your] guidance and strengthen our rectitude on the path of Oneness, that is, the path of those who have been blessed with a special grace consisting of 'gnosis', 'love' and 'essential true unity'. [It is the path of] the prophets, the veracious, the martyrs and the righteous, who, having beheld solely the face of the All-Enduring as being the First, the Last, the Hidden and the Manifest, have attained self-annihilation and passed away in their witnessing from their own shadow-like temporary existence.

Know that all people, with respect to their journeying on the straight path, are divided into two groups: the first group includes the people who are travelling a path which is well known to them and whose end they know will lead to the Real. This is, in the true sense of the term, the straight path, and the people [who walk thereon] are the unity-affirming gnostics. The second group consists of the people who, though walking on a road, are ignorant of the nature of that road and do not even know whether or not it might lead to the Real. In reality, this is not *the* straight path [in the sense cited above], even though it is considered a kind of straight path according to the gnostics. A quatrain:[8]

5. Cf. '*For to whomsoever God gives no light, he has no light*' (Q. 24:40).

6. Q. 24:35.

7. Q. 1:6.

8. In quoting this poem Anqarawī wants to indicate that all paths ultimately lead to God, a notion which is commonplace for most of the gnostics, and is further substantiated by the author in his other works with the help of other Quranic verses, e.g.: '*The Path of God, to Whom belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Surely unto God all things return*' (42:53); '*God encompasses all things*' (4:126).

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Wherever we set foot, it was Your street.
Whatever corner we turned, it was Your name in the air.
We said, 'Surely there must be a road leading elsewhere?'
But every road we found, it led to You.[9]

Such guidance and illuminating knowledge are in fact some of the favours which God bestows on whomever He wills amongst His servants. Nevertheless, had He so willed, He could have given guidance to all; but He willed not, as God most High has stated: '*If We had so willed, We could certainly have guided every soul. But the truth of the Word from Me is that I will fill Hell with jinns and human beings all together.*'[10] As this verse demonstrates, God does not will that an unbeliever should have faith, since all He desires of him is his disbelief; otherwise, had He so willed, He would have guided him. But He willed not, due to His knowledge, which rules out the [possible] occurrence of guidance for all.

Besides, [God's] volition is connected only with those matters that have been decreed to be '*thus*'[11] and are therefore not open to the question: 'Why is it that He has made those who are guided to be worthy of guidance, and those who have strayed to be in error?' For the same reason, it is not appropriate to ask the question, 'Why is it that He has rendered dog as "dog", or human being as "human"?' At this stage, however, one may offer a response for the sake of the veiled [by referring to the Quran]: '*He [God] cannot be questioned for His acts, but they will be questioned for theirs.*'[12] Concerning the gnostics, one

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Thus, he states that the end of every path and the final goal of every mystic traveller remain both existentially (*wujūdan*) and epistemologically (*'ilman*) within His overall comprehensiveness (*iḥāṭa*). See further *Futūḥāt-i 'Ayniyya*, p.197.

9. The same poem is cited by Anqarawī in his exegetical work, *Futūḥāt-i 'Ayniyya* (pp.197–8), in connection with the interpretation of the verse, '*Guide us to the straight path*' (Q. 1:6); see also n.8 above.

10. Q. 32:13.

11. That is to say, God's volition concerns only those things upon which the will is exercised.

12. Q. 21:23.

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might simply have told them that, because of His non-bestowal of guidance upon certain individuals, He did not will guidance for all. In other words, He did not guide some individuals, as His volition was not intended for the guidance of all. For God's affairs demand not only guidance, but error as well. Moreover, a portion of His affairs are arranged on the basis of error, just as another portion are arranged on the basis of guidance. For sometimes things become clear only by their opposites. It is for this reason that He divided the whole abode of the Hereafter into Heaven and Hell and created Adam by His own two hands, one for the attributes of Divine Beauty as manifested in Paradise in the Hereafter, and the other for the attributes of Divine Majesty as manifested in Hell.

It would be inconceivable for the all-Knowing and the all-Wise, who arranges [and does] every thing in order according to His own wisdom, to direct His volition towards the [creation or] occurrence of any thing which is useless. By the same token, if there were no evil in this world, all that God has created would have been confined only to what is good, and there would have been no place for evil. But this is contrary to Divine wisdom; because, for instance, in the case of the artist who intends to draw a picture but is unable to choose a subject [for his picture] from among the vast choice of forms, such as large or small, long or short, beautiful or ugly, he cannot therefore be called perfect in his art. The Real and most High [God], on the other hand, puts everything in its own place. Therefore, one is not able to deny the existence of error or falsehood in the evolution [and operation] of His wisdom, as it constitutes part of its manifestations. As the Sultan of the Gnostics said in his *Mathnawī:*

> Infidelity, too, is wisdom in relation to the Creator,
> (But) when you impute it to us, infidelity is a noxious thing.[13]

13. *Mathnawī*, Book I:1997.

Guidance, when taken in another sense, is understood to mean 'the witnessing of the reality of a thing as it is, and the removal of the veil from the eyes of the hearts'. Such an idea [of guidance] finds its meaning, once again, in this verse: '*If We had so willed, We could certainly have given every soul its [true] guidance.*'[14] That is to say, by removing the veils from the eyes of their hearts, We could have unveiled to them the true nature of a thing, so that they could witness and perceive that thing exactly as it is, and thus better understand why and how some individuals would demand belief and others disbelief. However, not every one from among the people of this world can remove the veil from his heart and perceive the reality of a thing as it is, because, depending on their [pre-ordained] individual states, some people are knowledgeable, while others are ignorant. Were it not difficult for the weak-minded, [and if I had no fear on their behalf], I would at this stage expound the mystery of the [Divine] decree; however, because such a [complex and perilous] subject may cause [their] feet to slip, no further discourse on it here is therefore appropriate.

Once this notion [of guidance] has been established, the secret behind the following words becomes manifest to you: '*God does guide whomever He wills to His light*',[15] that is, [He guides] to the light of His attributes as well as to the unity of His Essence, whomever He pleases amongst His servants, as required by their aptitudes. '*God sets forth parables for human beings*'[16] as a gracious favour upon them, so that they become acquainted both with ideas pertaining to the intellect and secret intentions pertaining to the spirit; and thus they ascend, by virtue of those parables, upon the ladder of the reality. For parables are like mirrors without which the forms of ideas would not become manifest.

'*God does know all things.*'[17] Now you must know that the objects of God's knowledge consist of four parts: the first part covers all

14. Q. 32:13.
15. Q. 24:35.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.

that exists; the second part comprises all that does not exist; the third part involves knowing 'what the modality [i.e. the actual state] of an existent would be, if it were a non-existent'; and the fourth part concerns knowing 'what the modality [i.e. the actual state] of a non-existent would be, if it were an existent'. The first two parts are concerned with the knowledge of all that has come into existence and all that has happened, whereas the last two are concerned with the knowledge of all that is likely to come into existence and all that will happen. '*And they comprehend nothing of His knowledge save that which He wills*',[18] and '*Nor does even the tiniest atom in the heavens and earth escape from Him* [i.e. from His Knowledge].'[19] His knowledge is pre-eternal, as it is identical with His very Essence. Furthermore, the Real [i.e. God] knows things in the same way as He knows His own Essence, and not by anything else.

However, if you were to argue by saying that certain people of perfection have asserted that knowledge is dependent on the objects of knowledge, but if [as you claim] knowledge is identical with the very essence, how is it then possible that the essence should be dependent on the object of knowledge, given that the objects of knowledge are the immutable entities and their states, which are in effect the realities of all that exists? I would reply as follows: the relation of the attributes to the essence can be considered in two ways: either they are not distinct from it or they are different from it. In the first consideration the attributes, like 'knowledge', 'will', 'power' and certain others [qualities, attributes] that are ascribed to the essence by way of relation, do not depend on the object of knowledge. Thus, 'will' [for instance] does not depend on the object of 'will', nor does 'power' depend on the object of 'power', since they are identical with the essence and hence cause no duality therein. In the second consideration, however, 'knowledge' is dependent on the object of knowledge, just as 'will' and 'power' are dependent on the object of 'will' and the object of 'power', respectively. When knowledge

18. Q. 2:255.
19. Q. 34:3.

has a relation of dependency upon the object of knowledge in the presence of names and attributes in such a way that it demands the object of knowledge – and in the case of 'will' it demands the object of 'will' and in the case of 'power' it demands the object of 'power' – knowledge has no effect on the object of knowledge; but rather, the object of knowledge does have an effect on the knower. And the effect that the object of knowledge has on the knower means that it requires and demands that the knowing and powerful agent brings it into existence as it is.

By establishing the two levels [of relation of attribute to essence as above] one arrives at the following conclusion: the knowledge of the Real [i.e. God] is in no way bound to be derived from the requirement of the objects of knowledge. Nor does the occurrence of knowledge in Him depend necessarily upon the objects of knowledge. For the occurrence of knowledge in Him depends not necessarily upon the objects of knowledge. Indeed, all of these things just mentioned are necessary, but only at the level of Names and Attributes. At such a level, of course, knowledge depends on the object of knowledge. However, at the level of Oneness, knowledge never depends on the object of knowledge. On the contrary, at this level both knowledge and the object of knowledge are one and the same thing. Although there has been much investigation into this matter, it would not be appropriate for us to recount it in this short treatise. Nevertheless, if need be, you should examine the books of the masters [of this school], until this matter, and in particular the [answers to the] questions, 'In what way does knowledge depend on the object of knowledge?' and 'In what way does the object of knowledge depend on knowledge?', are disclosed to you. In doing so, you may also join the gnostics whose interior eyes will not be obstructed by [the veils of] uncertainties and suspicions and 'whose faces will not be concealed by any stain of disgrace and misdeed'.[20]

20. Allusion appears to have been made to the Quranic verse: 'neither darkness nor shame shall cover their faces; they are Companions of Paradise' (10:26).

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O my God! Guard us against indulging in all that is forbidden. Show us the natures of things as they are. Deliver us from the darkness of ignorance. Safeguard us and cleanse us from all grievous, shameful things, as well as all interior and exterior, covert and overt impurities. We beseech this of You in the name of the perfect souls who are satisfied and well-pleased [with You], and pleasing [to You].

This treatise, comprised of extraordinary mysteries and splendid pearls of gnosis, has finally been completed. I seek from those who study this compendium to recite the [chapter of] *Fātiḥa* [for the sake of my soul].

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Wherever we set foot, it was Your street.
Whatever corner we turned, it was Your name in the air.
We said, 'Surely there must be a road leading elsewhere?'
But every road we found, it led to You.

This book unearths a hidden treasure from the golden age of Ottoman scholarship: an original commentary by Ismāʿīl Anqarawī on the Light Verse of the Quran, presented here in English for the first time.

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